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To
Jerry Busic
with best wishes for
pleasant reading.
Christmas 1955
from
W. D. Simpson

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UPAZI

UPAZI

BY

W. J. HAIRS

THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD

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TO
JACOBUS

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CHAPTER 1.

CECIL RHODES, Doctors Jim and Shultz and, later, the beautiful Princess Radzivall, were magic names in the early pioneering days of Rhodesia—that inland empire within an Empire, a lasting and increasingly valuable monument to the greatest of them all, Cecil Rhodes.

What memories of South Africa these names conjure up in the minds of those who, like myself, went through the excitement and dangers of its early days!

Africa south of the Zambesi had lost much of its wildness. Lions no longer hunted the veldt, penetrating into villages, even the one of corrugated iron buildings which is now the City of Bulowayo, where on very rare occasions the hungry beasts have been known to seize a native child and carry it off to their jungle lair.

Big game was growing scarce, with the exception of Koodoo, vilde-beeste and springbok. Is it, then, any wonder that I turned my eyes toward the north where great numbers of elephants, lions, and even giant gorillas still roamed the lawless jungle? Rumours had come to me of strange tribes of cannibals that lived back of the Mountains of the Moon, or, as some called them, the Mysterious Mountains; also stories that, deeper still, in that almost impenetrable country lying westward of these mountains, somewhere midst the fastnesses of the great Itura Forest, was the habitat of the elusive and little-known, in fact almost mythical, animal, "the Okapi".

The temptation became too great to resist; so at last I decided to ascertain first hand if such stories were true. Years before, I had visited the remains of Zimbabwe, reputedly the ruins of Queen Sheba's and King Solomon's mine. I was now hopeful that somewhere in the wilds of the Congo I, myself, might find monuments of an even earlier civilization. The very thought of

this possibility fired my imagination until I was in a fever of excitement to be starting.

. . . . . .

Mombasa, the principal port of disembarkation for that vast and little known country of Central East Africa, would be my logical starting point. From there I would trek into the hinterland.

With me went Jacobus. His full name was Jacobus October Cloete. He was a Herero Hottentot, a fearless companion and devoted servant. I had found him some years previously, when he was a mere lad of fourteen, and I had been trekking across the Kalahari Desert towards the German border in the hope of finding new fields of excitement. The journey across had been very severe on my horse and myself. Water had been uncommonly scarce as in some parts of this desert no rain had fallen for seven years.

Jacobus I found on the wind-blown edge of a high ridge where nothing but the fantastically-shaped cacti grew. These particular cacti grew in shapes which appear, from a short distance, to be old scarecrows with their one hand pointing east and the other west—their faces turned to the south. So it was that what appeared to me from a distance to be a short cactus tree near a larger one turned out to be, on drawing nearer, a young Hottentot boy.

At that moment he was the saddest-looking human being I had ever seen. He could not speak Dutch or English and I could not get my tongue around the clicks in the Hottentot dialect; therefore, most of our conversation was carried on by gesticulations and signs, and the guttural noises of two parched tongues. Eventually I learned the cause of this waif's loneliness. His father had aroused the enmity of his tribe and, in attempting to escape their vengeance, had been badly wounded, but with the indomitable courage and hardihood of his race had managed to get away and was making for the fastnesses of the mountains towards the border —the same range which I also had been attempting to reach when I came across Jacobus. The older man had later been joined by this mere lad, who had brought his wounded father fragments of food, and together they had again set out in an effort to reach British territory and succour.

Misfortune after misfortune had befallen them. Food was non-existent; water there was none. These privations and his wounds had proven too much for the endurance of even a hardy Herero Hottentot, and less than a couple of hours had passed since Jacobus had scraped with his bare hands a shallow hole near that grotesque-looking cactus tree,* laboriously dragging and pushing the remains of his father into it, covering it up as best he could. His fingers were worn almost raw with his efforts, but never a complaint did he make and, apart from the actual knowledge that his father was no more, Jacobus showed little more outward emotion than he might at losing a locust.

As soon as I understood the situation I asked him how far off his tribe was and, on learning it was two days' march, I made known to Jacobus that I would take him to them. At this he showed signs of abject terror and falling on his knees clawed at my arms and breeches and, no doubt, in his own dialect made a profound and eloquent appeal to me not to take him back. I promised that no harm would befall him, but it was all to no avail. Jacobus continued his wailing and pleading until I lifted him on to his feet and, pushing him in front of me, directed him to proceed in the direction of his tribe's last encampment. Being something of a nomad myself, I did not want the care of an immature Hottentot on my hands.

Towards sundown, utterly worn out from fatigue, hunger and, worse still, lack of water, we reached a *donga* in which were a few clusters of granite rock. One of these clusters was about eight to ten feet in height. Towards this we stumbled, almost in the last extremities of that lethargy which precedes the final collapse of those who go down in the desert.

Long before this happened I had been leading my horse, as he was far too weak to carry me. In fact, he had been stumbling so badly during the last few hours that I had almost given up

*This particular species of cactus is given a wide berth by all desert travellers, and amongst the natives of Namaqualand a legend of sinister import prevails to the effect that if a human being happens to linger within reach of its outstretched arms at high noon he will be clasped in a vice-like grip from which escape is impossible, and later, when his struggles cease, the head of this strangely-shaped cactus tree will droop and through its disc-like suckers drain the blood from its victim. Whether this legend be true or not, the fact remains that neither European nor native will go near, and certainly will not touch, these particular trees.

hope of getting him out of this nightmare of a furnace at all. On reaching the big rock, I unsaddled the horse and let him loose, knowing the poor brute would not wander.

For some minutes I sat disconsolately flattened against that rock and, whilst trying to get what little shade it afforded, the one thought went dinning through my mind—*Water! Water! What would I not give for water!*—until I thought my temples would burst. With half-closed eyes I presently noticed a desert mole scraping away for dear life in the sand almost at my feet. At first I took very little notice, but soon when the little animal had buried itself beneath the sand, I saw, to my amazement, the sand changing colour. Or was I dreaming? Had my overwrought nerves brought on hallucinations? No, sure enough, the sand had changed, there was no doubt of it. It had positively taken on a damp appearance.

Once convinced of this, I called Jacobus over; instantly his desert craft told him what I did not know. Frantically he went on his hands and knees, clawing and tearing away the sand in fistfuls. After working furiously for several moments he sprang to his feet with a screech like a wild fowl, his hands clasping a bunch of tiny snow-white bulbs. Giving half to me, he crammed the rest into his capacious mouth, chewing them rapaciously, while glints of joy lit up his little pig-like eyes. I crushed one of the bulbs in my fingers and there, sure enough, water pure and cool trickled out. Eagerly I pushed them into my own mouth and chewed, and then I went down frenziedly on my knees, seeking more of these life-saving roots. Between us we found enough for our needs.

For some time then I sat conjecturing the possibilities of Jacobus. He was certainly very young, but this was probably to my advantage; I would more or less mould him into my own ways and, with his knowledge of the desert, he would soon become invaluable to such a nomad as myself. Suddenly I determined that Jacobus would be mine and, when I made this decision known to him, his look of gratitude, unadorned by any flow of words, was thanks enough.

Before very long Jacobus could speak fairly understandable English and, as we travel together throughout this book, you will

realize what a find I made on the edge of the desert that afternoon when Jacobus probably saved my life by the discovery of those precious white roots.

. . . . . .

Kilindini, the port of entry to Kenya and Uganda, is tropical; unfortunately it has too much humidity for human comfort. There was but one way to get cooled off at Kilindini and that was by riding on the man-powered miniature street car which ran on a narrow gauge from the port of Kilindini, through tree-shaded streets, to the town of Mombasa. Two semi-naked Swahilis furnished the motive power for the car, pushing and puffing up the inclines and jumping on the back of the car to coast down the grades. Each wore a red fez, and a not too abundant loin cloth and, generally, a smile. This man-pushed street car wound for two miles among straggling suburbs and coconut plantations. Thus I made my entry to the town of Mombasa.

Kilindini is a busy port and naval coaling station. It has the deepest landlocked harbour on the east coast and the largest tonnage ships can be safely accommodated here. My first few days I spent wandering about getting used to the place, the climate, the natives, and learning as much of the Swahili language as possible. I came across what I was informed were cream-of-tartar trees, their circumference being from ten to twenty feet, with trunks so soft that a hard lead pencil could be pushed into them. Later I wanted to see a native climbing a coconut tree. I found the tree and then went in search of the native. I approached a likely-looking Somali, but his look of utter disgust on being told of my wish almost discouraged me. I showed him a handful of rupees, feeling sure the bargain would be clinched, but to my surprise he merely took hold of a small bag hanging at his waist and, shaking it until it jingled, made it clear that he was not in need of money. He stalked off, high-hatting me in regal Somali style.

The next native I waylaid in my quest was a young Swahili who readily agreed to go to the top of the tree for half a rupee and to throw down as many coconuts as I desired. It was well

worth the small sum of money to see that native scale the tall tree, wrapping his arms about the trunk, raising first one black leg and then the other almost as high as his arms, swarming up the tree as easily, to all appearances, as he would have walked on the earth. He seemed almost to run straight up into the sky and was raining down coconuts in no time. Breaking one open, I drank of the fresh sweet milk sparingly, as I had been warned against drinking it excessively.

One evening some time later, sitting in a little Kilindini wine shop, I overheard a group of Frenchmen chatting of incidents they had experienced on the south-western shores of Lake Victoria Nyanza (the largest sheet of water in Africa, being four hundred by two hundred miles). My attention was instantly riveted on their conversation, as my life-long friend, Antoine, had set out for the part they were speaking about some couple of years before. Apologising for interrupting their conversation, I enquired if by any chance any of them had known Antoine Vosion.

One of the three sprang to his feet shouting: "Oui, oui, Monsieur! Antoine Vosion is my best friend and I have only one month ago left him." What luck this was, I thought, or was it Providence or chance?

The little group at the table invited me to sit down and, ordering more wine, we talked far into the night of that strange part of the country which I yearned to reach. I left these men more determined than ever to start for the interior as early as possible. I learned that my friend, Antoine, was just a little south-west of Bukoba, south-west of Lake Victoria Nyanza.

Within a few days of this conversation I had completed my arrangements for my inland journey and secured my transportation in one of the little box-like carriages on the train of the Uganda Railway—which, by the way, was completed from the town of Mombasa to Kisumu, on Lake Victoria Nyanza, in 1901. Makindu, which lies about half-way between Voi and Nairobi, was the point from which I would make my first journey into actual game country. Here I camped a few days making my safari of native porters, gun carriers and cooks.

The news of our arrival soon spread among the natives of the surrounding country and within four days I had selected ten boys from the different tribes of Swahilis, Masais, Nandys, Abyssinians

and Somalis, all of whom, besides speaking their own dialects, spoke sufficient Swahili to understand each other. In appearance and language these boys, separately and collectively, are entirely unlike the South African native; they did not impress me as possessing any unusual stamina, loyalty or courage. I therefore decided upon making a few sorties before starting on the more important and exciting part of my journey, a journey which would eventually lead into the wildest and least-known parts of Central Africa. Such treks would test the boys I had chosen and would enable me to become better acquainted with both their dialects and their mental and physical calibre, thus enabling me to reject and replace any unsuitable for the task ahead.

One afternoon Jacobus came bounding toward where I stood outside my *bando* (native hut), pointing excitedly away into the distance. Through my glasses I could see a group of some twenty white-robed Somalis travelling towards us across the dry hot terrain, driving a herd of mules. "Mules, Bwana, mules!" Jacobus exclaimed excitedly, "just what you need." "Yes," I thought, "a good sturdy mule would indeed be helpful."

As they came nearer a tall Somali with perspiring, beaming face—apparently the leader—approached and, with many deep salaams, asked if, as water was plentiful at our camp-site, the Bwana would grant them permission to pitch camp nearby. Upon receiving permission, he informed me that they had come from Abyssinia and were bound for Nairobi to sell their mules.

Remembering that Abyssinian mules, though small, were very wiry and could go all day on practically nothing, I entered into negotiations to purchase one. After much discussion and bargaining, eventually I became the owner of a limpid-eyed, long-eared beige-coloured animal whom I straightaway christened Magnolia.

Next to Jacobus, who acted as overseer of the safari, came the *saidi* (head-boy), a giant Masai, who, because of his attire—nothing but a tattered frock-coat—had earned from me the appropriate cognomen of "Coat Tails." Could you have seen him, coat tails streaming behind him, running after the little Abyssinian mule, you would have understood why no other name could possibly suit him so well. My cook-boy, an equally big Swahili, was named Capera.

The native armaments consisted of a long serviceable-looking

home-made knife, or machet, with which they are swift and skilful. It is worn in the loin-clout. When trekking through jungle-like country a machet is always carried naked and ready. With this formidable weapon they cleave their way through dense tangled vegetation and, at times, defend themselves when unexpected things happen. These machets are about thirty inches long with a handle of about six inches; the blade gradually broadens out from the handle until it is broadest and heaviest at the tip. It is this weight at the tip, combined with its hard and razor-like edge, which makes it one of the most formidable and useful weapons for jungle travel. When on safari, I seldom travelled far without one in my hand.

Most East Central African natives also carry huge bows and arrows, and all carry huge spears which are about seven feet long, with a three-foot blade shaped like a straight two-edged sword. The handle is in the centre and not more than eight or nine inches long and made of very hard, heavy wood. The other end of the spear is a round rod of steel about three-eighths of an inch in thickness, which the natives stick into the ground, never being guilty of laying them down. These spears, unlike the South African assegai, which is more or less a throwing spear, are stabbing spears only. The arrows used in their six-foot bows are long, serviceable and heavy.

My own armament consisted of several heavy calibre rifles, a revolver and a large supply of ammunition for both, several good knives, a saw, axe, spade and the indispensable machet. I had also brought up from Cape Town and Mombasa several parcels containing a multiple number of bright baubles such as bead necklaces, bangles, girdles, mirrors and a display of gaudily-coloured silk shawls and kimonos with which to win the good-will of any belligerent natives with whom I might come in contact later; also huge supplies of crushed rice for my safari. This rice, mixed with cold water into a thick paste-like substance and eaten with dates, is the natives' main food. The greater part of the food supply, and also most of my ammunition and guns, I left in charge of a few boys at my base-camp at Makindu whilst going on this short and, as I then thought, more or less uneventful side-trip.

I decided to trek almost south. This would take me towards what was then the border of German East Africa. In this direction, a little east of Kilimanjaro, was low lying country which, I had been informed, was the haunt of the zebra, kongonia, lion, and perhaps a few rhinos, while further on I would reach the Pangani, a river which traces its source to the highest mountain in Africa —Kilimanjaro, 19,625 feet.

Several days of uneventful marching brought us to Satako. Here we pitched a camp from which we made several sorties into the semi-jungle but, with the exception of hearing an occasional roar from a distant lion and catching sight of a few large apes, our progress had little excitement. One day towards sunset, however, being in a discontented frame of mind, I was on the point of returning to camp when we were suddenly brought into instant alertness by a terrific rushing and crashing through the undergrowth about fifty yards distant. The boys had been marching in irregular extended order in the hope of beating up some animal; those forward in the line were now fleeing in terror. Running forward, I found Coat Tails and Capera standing their ground. As I sped past, they yelled that a huge rhino was attacking one of the boys on the left flank.

Rushing ahead, I saw a great bull rhino which had charged one of the Masais, knocked him down and was kneading him into the ground. The rear of the beast being toward me, I let fly the contents of both barrels of my gun. Both shots took effect. The shots had entered at the base of the spine and traversed the length of the animal's body to the skull. With a squeal and a succession of terrible twitchings, the rhino fell on his side and lay quiet. The poor native, half covered with earth, also lay still.

That evening around the campfire we were a depressed lot. I gathered the boys together and gave them each an extra share of snuff; but it did not have the usual cheerful effect.

After the evening meal I sat pondering over the day's happenings, depressed, then gradually I began to watch the boys who, having also finished their meal, were sitting on their haunches around the campfire. Jabbering excitedly, though in undertones, they were recounting unbelievably weird legends and folklore.

Unbelievable did I say? Sit some night, as I did then! Hear the occasional haunting lamentations of the two watchers over the body of their dead comrade; feel the silence which at times gripped those gathered about the fire; see them furtively glancing behind, out towards the impenetrable blackness of the jungle where, every once in a while, a pair of eyes gleamed; hear the vibrating roar of a lion and the sudden snarl of a leopard, the violent threshing of grass followed by the startled screech of a night bird; feel the almost mesmeric awe with which the boys listened to the one who happened to be talking, then perhaps you, too, would feel the chills creep up and down your spine and long—as I did—for the daylight to appear and disperse the ghostly terrors that peopled the dark shroud encompassing the jungle—a fitting cradle indeed to nurture the progenitors of these ghastly tales. Anything might happen!

Freeing myself as best I could from these overpowering terrors of the night, I arose and, bidding them all good-night in as cheerful a tone as I could muster, tumbled off to bed—but not to sleep. Tossing and turning, I relived the tales which I had heard, and when the leopard's snarl sounded a little nearer I must confess that I huddled a little deeper beneath my blankets.

Daylight filtered through the trees at last. Springing up, I aroused the boys and while the cook prepared coffee I gave them instructions to dig a last resting place for their dead comrade. A deep hole was dug and two of the boys fashioned a roughly-hewn cross which they fastened together with strong vines torn from the trees. Then, just as the morning sun burst into full radiance, the boys lowered their companion into his lonely grave. I murmured a few remembered words of the appropriate service, and, in truth, this sifting-in of a civilised custom enabled me to shake off memories of the night before that were still hovering in my mind, in spite of the glorious sunshine which had at last lighted the gloom.

Returning to the small clearing where we had made our camp, I meditated on the probable movements of the dead rhino's mate. I thought it very likely she would be near his place of death, so I called Capera and Coat Tails into conference on the matter. Capera was for getting out of this evil place. There were spirits

working against us; rhinos did not come so far south and east from their usual haunts; the evil dream-god had spoken to him during the night warning him that he was marked for death.

There is a difference of opinion among hunters as to the disposition of the rhino. Adjudged by some as ferocious and vindictive, the animal, on the other hand, also gets credit for being timid and stupid. After seeing a bull rhino crushing down young saplings in his wild stampede on a human being, I put him down as dangerous—perhaps the most dangerous and vindictive of all jungle beasts.

I laughed at Capera and, turning to Coat Tails, asked him what *his* god had to say about the matter. The six-foot Masai, powerful and determined-looking, stretched himself to his full height, saying: "Bwana, you pay me for good services. I will follow you!" He was of the opinion that, should we go deeper into the jungle, we could probably track the female and, if patient, get a good shot at her whilst she was seeking food or water.

Capera, the Swahili, was, after all, equal in physical prowess and courage to Coat Tails, so, rolling his eyes, he licked his sausage-like lips, then, in his own dialect, spat out to the effect that if a miserable Masai thought he could leave a Swahili in a camp while he went off to play the heroic hunter—well, the skinny Masai was just what the Swahili thought him to be! Coat Tails threw his companion a savage look and I thought it best to give both a job to do before Capera expressed himself further.

I ordered them off immediately to prepare for a day's sortie with guns and sufficient food for one meal each. Within thirty minutes we were on the march in single file, heading deeper into the jungle, myself in the lead, with Capera and Coat Tails close behind.

No sunshine could pierce this density of growth which we had entered. The almost impassable undergrowth shut out the heat from us so completely as to produce an uncanny coolness. The silence was broken only by the pat, pat of the natives' naked feet. I noted there was no path leading from the one which we trod—a path, to all appearances, not recently used by man or beast.

The monotonous patter of bare feet began to obsess me. There was no breeze, not a leaf in the jungle moved. A dried

branch underfoot sounded in my ears like a rifle shot. I watched the path before me. Not a footprint was visible, yet the trail was polished to smoothness, with no living blade of grass or vine in its foreboding length. The quiet had the quality of death; the air was oppressive. I confess I half-turned to Capera to suggest our turning back when a sound, half-human, half-demoniacal, rent the air. We stopped paralyzed in our tracks. The natives rolled their eyes, uttering no sound. The hideous noise continued. It seemed to come from first one side of us, then the other, and then to surround us. There was no sound of footsteps, only the horrible screeching. It seemed to be enticing me forward on the path. Tales of human vampires came to my mind. With a strained laugh I shouted to Capera that it was a good joke on us. Grotesquely, he wagged his black head.

"Bwana, no joke," he retorted. "Boys no like um. Want to go back!"

I made fun of them with a boisterousness born to keep up my own courage. This had no effect and I found I had to exercise eloquence to inveigle the natives to proceed.

Capera and Coat Tails now crept forward and related in their Swahili and pidgin English a legend explaining that the pathway we were travelling must be the long-lost trail which the tribes, supposedly the Kikuyus, who had been driven north by approaching civilization, had used to reach their "sacred council chambers" which contained their sacrificial stones and High Priest's altars.

This was indeed exciting and made me more eager than ever to press on, but prudence gained over my impetuosity and I reluctantly decided to return to camp and start out afresh the next day, better prepared for a possible three-day sojourn, in an effort to prove or disprove the truth of those legends the boys had told of a mystifying, long-forgotten past. While it is true that my mind rejected those legends as mythical in the extreme, it is also true that there still exist the Kikuyus and other tribes who not so long ago practised cannibalistic rites. Therefore, what might I not discover at the end of that silent, dark, smoothly-worn path? To the great relief of all, I gave the order to retrace our steps and, towards sunset, we reached camp. That night I did full justice to the *blaasboek*.

After giving instructions for an early start next morning, and seeing that the fires were well built up, with wood alongside sufficient for the night supply, I posted relay guards for the watch and signalled Jacobus to accompany me to my *bando* of branches and grass, where I told him of the day's adventure. I knew that in case of emergency Jacobus would prove more valuable to me than any of the others, so I bade him make ready to go with me in the morning. He was delighted at the prospect of accompanying me.

I told Jacobus that I would also take Shauri, Capera and Basaula—the latter being Coat Tails' true name. Calling the three of them from their firelit circle, I gave each a portion of snuff which, by the way, is not sniffed. The powder is gathered into the curve of the index finger and laid around the gums of the lower jaw where it materially helps in making the user just a little more repulsive to look upon when he speaks or laughs. Squatting on the opposite side of the fire they awaited my words in silence. Now and then one of them would draw back his lips and emit a needle-like stream of snuff-laden saliva yards long which, with fine unconcern, they aimed most effectively at a meddlesome fly or mosquito.

Beginning with Capera, I questioned them. Each in turn reiterated their loyalty, and swore they would follow me anywhere, but stated that the other boys were frightened and wanted to turn back, remaining obdurate to either encouragement or ridicule. It was not a matter of fear of the living beasts of the jungle. The three blacks squatting before me confessed that even they had no desire to linger in this particular spot upon which we had accidentally stumbled, for surely it was the haunted trail of the ancient cannibalistic Kikuyus.

I asked for further details of the legend of the Kikuyus which, briefly, was that no jungle mortal ever held more power over the tribes of East Central Africa than did the fetish man or high priest of the natives. His hold extended beyond the women and warriors to the chief and even to the king of the tribe as well. Continual and unholy fear kept ruler and ruled alike at his feet. Inordinately cruel and merciless, the fetish man betrayed and murdered under the cloak of "the god's orders," and in the name of those deities called his hideous crimes "holy sacrifices." Under

the sway of their high priest, they not only offered up human beings, but they also ate their victims. Although at the time this tale was related to me most of the tribe of Kikuyus had been driven further inland by the advance of civilization, those remaining in this part of the country, to my knowledge, still filed their teeth, upper and lower, to the shape of the fangs of a dog —a relic of the days of cannibalism which they no longer practised. With the pitch blackness of the jungle night, the equally black bodies of my natives sharply silhouetted against the flaming campfires, the night noises of fowl and beast surrounding us, it was not so strange that I should almost believe this yarn myself. Pulling myself together, I asked Capera and Coat Tails if they believed those absurd tales, but could draw from them only this:

"Bwana, we do not know. Many strange things happen here. We do not know how or why and so we must believe what our forefathers taught us."

Leaving them, I approached the larger circle of natives who, squatting around their fires, were excitedly, but in subdued tones, chattering away in the midst of some kind of debate. They suddenly ceased, however, when they saw me. Without any preliminaries I straightaway told them that I considered the story I had heard but a legacy from their forefathers; lies invented by some cunning individual of long ago in order to gain evil power over their chieftain and king; that, in other words, the silly tale recounted to me by Coat Tails was invented to make just such brave boys as they afraid. With other concoctions of a glib tongue I strove to divert their minds from the depressing stories they still undoubtedly thought to be true. I told them we had enough guns and ammunition to blow away half the jungle. Then, passing around the snuff, I left for my bed feeling I had pacified them sufficiently to keep the promise they had made to me to stick to the expedition. I later had further assurance of the reconciliation when I heard their voices rise softly on the night air in a jungle chant of weirdly pleasing melody. Pulling my blankets up, and closing my eyes, I remembered no more until Jacobus awakened me by tugging at my sleeve and giving voice to his familiar invitation, "Goup ob tea, Baas . . . goup ob tea."

CHAPTER 2.

IT was barely daylight when we made our start. The uncertainty of what we might be about to discover kept me in a state of tension. Enough food for a three days' journey was taken. I was in the lead with Jacobus a few paces behind me, followed by Capera. The line of boys with Coat Tails brought up the rear.

Jacobus carried my heavy calibre rifle as well as his own. I carried my revolver and a heavy machet. We had traversed a scant fifty yards when I could hear Coat Tails from the rear bellowing: "Upazi! Upazi!" and then the swish, zip, swish of his sjambok.

I occasionally caught a disgruntled murmur from the file of boys. After all, their hearts were definitely not in the journey. Coat Tails, however, was proving a stern master. As we progressed the murmurings gradually grew less and, for some unaccountable reason, footsteps grew lighter, until there was barely a sound to the movements of the line. The air was humid; no leaf rustled; even our breathing was hushed; silence had taken possession of us. To break such an unaccountably uncomfortable spell I tried whistling but, at this, Capera softly called: "Strange things in the jungle we no can see!" then drawing closer added that already the boys in the line were likely to take a stealthy leave at the least provocation.

"In that case," I said, "join Coat Tails at the rear and see that no one deserts."

With this rearrangement settled, again there was an oppressive silence. It seemed as though the world had ceased to pulsate. We were approaching the spot where, on the day before, we had had our eerie experience. I noticed the blazed tree which I had

marked. There was no repetition of those screechings and I was conscious that the boys took heart at this point of our progress.

Here we made a brief halt, which broke the tenseness of the situation, then marched on again. The pathway grew narrower; the jungle engulfed us. The air, the overhanging trees, our paraphernalia, our very clothing weighed down upon us until the space about us seemed filled with a presence ominous and hateful. While this thought played upon my imagination there came from directly above us that sudden hideous screech—half human, half animal; then suddenly it ceased. Glancing up I could see nothing. The line stopped and each native gaped in terror toward Capera, but both he and Coat Tails had drawn their murderous-looking knives and stood ready in case any man made as if to flee. Then, with a suddenness that appalled us, that fearsome screeching again broke the deathly stillness. For a few moments it continued, then died down—only to break forth again and again with greater fierceness. I could now hear what sounded like a threshing of wings and on looking up saw first one, then two, then several giant bats as they flew in an irregular circle above the tree tops. Intermittently one or more would suddenly dip and wheel within a few feet of our heads.

Not until then did I recall those legends which the boys had recounted—handed down, they had explained, by their forefathers —which related that whenever a victim of the cruel priests had died his spirit entered a giant bat, which flitted about the scene of his last mortal moments waiting to take toll of human life in exchange for his own before departing to the spirit land. According to this tale, the high priests, one by one, had also met horrible deaths for which the giant bats were held responsible.

The natives were in a state of terror and, though I felt there was no possible danger from these things-of-ill-omen, my mind was not completely tranquil. Knowing that the morale of the boys depended on my own actions, I made a supreme effort to throw off my absurd feeling of being cut off from normality and isolated in a universe of loathsome horror. An inexplicable sensation as of a mysterious presence drawing near tended to crush out all desire for action, but, with an effort, I managed to give the order to advance. Meanwhile, the huge vampire-like creatures

continued to whirl and dip overhead. Pushing on with greater speed, we found that the pathway here took a sharp turn and started to ascend.

We climbed to a height of perhaps two hundred feet and then began dropping at an acute angle until we had reached a much lower level than the spot at which the bats first appeared. The ever-narrowing pathway, low-hung with closely interlaced mattressed-like vines and trees, became more and more difficult to traverse. We were compelled to bend almost double and proceeded in this strained posture. I felt sure we were nearing our goal. Then suddenly we burst into a great clearing. Being now almost sunset and knowing complete darkness would quickly follow, I decided to camp here and instructed Jacobus, Capera and Coat Tails to set the boys collecting firewood immediately.

The bats were still to be seen circling above, giving vent to their unearthly calls. Dividing the natives into four groups, putting each group in charge of one of my head boys and taking charge of the fourth group myself, I led off with my group along the fringe of that part of the clearing which I had chosen; the boys, however, were panic-stricken; they crowded too closely together to make any progress. Cheery bantering and, at least superficially, making light of the situation, obviously were the best incentives, as very shortly a semblance of calm was gained. I noticed some strange, large cup-shaped rock formations standing at irregular intervals, each peculiarly-shaped boulder set a few feet away from the edge of the clearing. Directly from each boulder a pathway led straight back into the jungle, each path taking a different direction, the path we had followed being one of them. I took my bearings from the sinking sun and noted that the paths led to the four points of the compass.

I chose the vicinity of the rock opposite the path by which we had entered the clearing for our camping site. From the opposite side of this arena and jutting out towards the centre was a huge irregularly-shaped rock which had fascinated me from the moment I had entered the clearing. On taking a closer view I could see what appeared to be the mouth of a high cave almost hidden by tangled vines and underbrush. Bats soared toward it persistently and in the now dim light, watching the repulsive

things closely, I noticed one of them dipping, suddenly to disappear, not into the entrance in front, but just behind the top of the mound. The bat did not reappear. After a moment of wheeling another bat dipped and disappeared; then another, and another. Surmising that there must be an opening in the top of the cave, I determined to investigate later.

Jacobus approached me at this moment—he must have been watching.

"Ples, Bwana, don't go dar tonight. It am very bad place, Bwana!" he whispered.

"Very well, Jacobus," I answered softly, "but let us, just you and I, have one little look, and then to camp."

Walking toward the mound, Jacobus, as if impelled, following quietly, we slipped across the clearing and drew near the rocky mass. I noticed that the earth about this place had been trodden down by countless feet perhaps for countless years. Glancing around the clearing, I could see, even in the fading light, that the whole loomed up as a great amphitheatre. Some fifteen feet in front of the entrance to the cave there stood a dais about twelve feet high, hewn from solid rock, at either end of which was a raised shelf about three feet square and as many feet high from the ground. Hewn in the side of this dais, nearest the entrance to the cave, were steps leading to within about a yard from the top of the strangely-shaped structure. About the base there lay bleached bones which crumbled to dust at our slightest touch. In the semi-darkness the place seemed filled with malignant spirits. Jacobus tugged at my sleeve imploring me to come away from this "place of dead men."

My curiosity, however, was aroused. I was determined to solve the secret of the carved rock before returning to camp that night. Mounting the steps cautiously in the fading light, I neared the top, my head just level with the top of the high platform. I stopped and turned cold as my eye caught the gruesome sight of a human skeleton lying full length, face toward me, in a shallow trench carved in the rock platform. Deciding not to reconnoitre further that night, I quickly rejoined Jacobus but said nothing to him concerning what I had seen.

"Strange place, Jacobus," I said casually.

Motioning to him to step along with me back to camp, I cautioned him to say nothing about the bones we had found around the base of the rock, especially in view of the fact that at present the natives now squatting around the camp fires were jabbering, cheerfully content.

After I had eaten my supper I posted two boys at each fire. Knowing the superstitious minds of the natives, I felt that giving each guard a companion would ensure sounder sleep for the rest of us, and very soon I rolled over in my blanket and fell asleep almost immediately, to be awakened, as it seemed, only a few moments later. In reality it was almost daybreak—a terrific commotion in camp had roused me. Rushing over to the crowd of obviously frightened natives, I demanded to know "what was wrong now."

"Der bat kill him, Bwana—de guard on da fire!" they gasped.

I found the "dead one" stretched on the ground. Kneeling down, I shook him soundly. He was unharmed but frightened almost to death. At last he opened his eyes. They were filled with unutterable fear. I gave him a few more shakes and at last got a word out of him.

"Take me away fum dis place," he panted, "it am full ob evil spirits."

"What did you see?" I demanded.

There were two great bats, he said, that had flown down almost on to his head, then soared off to swoop down and settle on the top of the rock which guarded the path by which we had come. From there, the trembling native declared, the bats had squealed and squeaked like two humans, all the time looking right at him. He had watched them talk about him, waiting for them to come and get him, until he felt so scared that he remembered no more and must have fallen dead where we found him.

Inwardly amused at such an absurd explanation, I bade the boys brighten up the fires. Capera's boys, the night before, had brought back word of a stream flowing in from the jungle which drained itself into a cavity at the base of the great mass of rocks near the centre of the amphitheatre. As soon as I had breakfasted, I set out with my party of four, and in a few minutes stood at the foot of the steps of the dais which I had climbed the night

before. Ordering the boys to remain below, I again climbed the steps, inspecting every inch as I proceeded. The steps were worn smooth down the centre from incessant tramping up and down. I sounded every crevice and corner and in the end felt sure there was no hidden entrance to the interior.

On reaching the top I carefully examined the skeleton lying there. The head was turned toward the east. As I stooped to make a more minute inspection, I was startled by a shrill screech. It came from a huge bat which had almost brushed against my head. It circled above my head making swift dives at me, then sheering off again. Whipping out my revolver, I fired and had the satisfaction of seeing it go fluttering down, uttering staccato screeches as it fell.

I watched it drop to the ground behind some bushes and, almost instantly, with a medley of hideous noises, a swarm of bats came pouring from the top of the cave and, swooping down on their luckless companion, bore it off. They first circled above the cave and then suddenly dipping down disappeared through the entrance, which I felt sure was somewhere on top of it.

Resuming my examination of the skeleton, I decided that it was possibly that of a young woman. During the progress of my examination the scabbard of my hunting knife inadvertently touched the skull which, to my consternation, crumpled to dust. I was terribly chagrined at this for I had had hopes of preserving it as a relic.

Beginning a search of my surroundings, I found near the top step a curiously-shaped instrument carved from solid stone. This, I imagined, was used by the High Priests in despatching their victims. With the weapon in my hands I descended the steps to join my boys in time to overhear a heated argument between Jacobus, Capera and the two others. It seemed that my shooting the bat was, to the natives, an omen of another evil to befall us. The extra boys, excepting Jacobus, were bent on running away lest, from the body of the dead vampire, the soul of one who had dwelt on earth at this very spot in bygone times should return and bring evil upon us. Coercion and bullying tactics were useless. At last I thought out the expedient of telling them they had been misinformed and that it was the release of the

spirit which brought about its salvation, enabling it to escape its loathsome, earthly prison and to soar away to rest forever. I assured them that no possible harm could befall them and that there would be no reappearance of the troubled spirit which they believed had just been freed. Thus gradually appeased, they once more reluctantly followed me.

A few paces ahead we reached the dense undergrowth which all but hid the entrance to the cavern. Setting the boys to work with their machets, we soon cleared a space that revealed another raised and carved stone dais standing in the entrance of the cave. A few steps led to its summit on which were three stone seats, the centre seat being a trifle higher than those on either side. Upright on this centre seat was the skeleton of a man, the skull of which lay back as though gazing at the ceiling. On looking up at the roof just inside the mouth of the cave, I was momentarily horrified to see a number of grinning skulls suspended therefrom. My gaze returned to the dais, the steps of which I now started to climb when suddenly Jacobus gain a warning cry. Springing back, I was just in time to avoid the fangs of a green mamba. Quick as a flash Jacobus had sliced the reptile in half with his machet.

Again I started to mount the steps, but this time more warily. On reaching the top I saw a scattered heap of bones on the stone seats on either side of the upright skeleton. The floor was also littered with similar chalky remains. Whenever my foot touched them they instantly crumbled into powder, conclusive proof of the eternity of time that had passed since they were part of a living being. In the hand of the one on the right was still clasped a weapon similar to that which I had found on top of the sacrificial pile. After a closer examination I found a large irregularly-shaped hole in the top of the skull of the centre skeleton which had unquestionably been made by that same weapon as it fitted perfectly into the hole. In making this experiment I again sacrificed another valuable trophy, for the skull fell into fine ash at an accidental slight touch.

What a dismal, sepulchre-like place, I thought, as I gazed down at the boys, grouped about the clearing below watching me with mingled fear and wonder. Forbidding as the cave appeared, it fascinated me, and I decided to venture further into its interior.

It seemed to extend a considerable distance back and downward. Beckoning my boys to follow, I led the way toward a huge grotto —the place into which I had seen some of the bats flying. As we went deeper into the cave the earth beneath our feet became soft and soggy. The rocks, jutting from the sides and roof, were dripping and covered with a thick, slimy moss which exuded an unbearable steamy odour. As we passed beneath the aperture in the roof, across which the bats were continually flitting, we could see that it was much larger than it appeared from the front entrance. The rocks along one side were well worn, making it obvious that it had been used as a place of egress.

Nearing the grotto the light was barely enough for us to see farther ahead than a few yards. I was on the point of sending one of the boys back for some torches, when suddenly several of the hateful bats flew out in what looked like a concerted attack upon us. All the boys, excepting Jacobus and Capera, gave frightened yells and fled to the entrance. Capera and Jacobus stood their ground. The great black-winged things flew at us fiercely, shrieking and piercing the tomb-like air with their cutting wings. I potted the nearest one with a revolver shot, while Jacobus swung at a second with his machet.

The next instant the whole place seemed alive with bats. At the mouth of the grotto there appeared hundreds of the flying creatures, some of them hanging to the walls, others clinging to the roof, while their mates piled on top of them, hissing and shrieking. The place resounded with the maddening bedlam. Soon they began to circle around us, each moment getting nearer and nearer, their menacing eyes peering with villainous intent.

During the momentary flashes of gun-fire I caught glimpses of the inner recesses of the grotto, which, to my further amazement, I saw were lined with human skulls. At the base of the outer wall of the grotto water rushed from a cavity; this I conjectured must be where the stream, which we had found the previous night, emptied itself. At this moment Coat Tails came rushing in with my heavy-calibred elephant rifle. Hearing shots, he had waited for no orders. I put the rifle into immediate use, thundering away with both barrels. The heavy shots tore into the rocks of the grotto and the next instant, to our amazed horror,

the whole place seemed to be melting away into the earth. Evidently I had dislodged some retaining rock near the soft and soggy portion of the cave; the earth seemed to be gradually sinking under our feet into what appeared to be a subterranean stream.

"Run for your lives!" I yelled and I lost no time following my own advice.

Luckily the distance to the entrance was slight and we made record time getting to it. Scrambling outside we gathered at a safe distance to gaze spellbound as the vast mound changed and crumbled, finally to be actually swallowed into the bowels of the earth. All that remained of the dais in the entrance of the cave, so far as we could now see, was a jumbled cluster of rocks and a tangled mass of vines and shrubbery.

After recovering somewhat from the shock of such an unpredictable incident I turned and, without a word, led the way back to our camp. The boys who had been left in charge were, I think, more frightened than those returning with me. Having no inkling of what had really happened, they had in their superstitious minds been conjuring up all kinds of dire calamities to our little party. Instructing Capera to tell them that all was now well and that the evil spirits had departed forever, I ordered Jacobus to prepare some food as quickly as possible. We would leave immediately after eating, I said, and try to reach the outside world again before dark.

Camp was reached just before dark. I lay beside my camp fire, meditating long on the day's experiences, and I concluded that the legends of the natives who roamed the country south and east of Makindu, particularly the low-lying jungle country in the south-east and that bordering the River Pangani, were founded on facts, and although the Masais, Nandys and Swahilis thought the vanished race to have been Kikuyus, I could learn nothing of a definite nature to substantiate their beliefs.*

*When asked later as to my theory of the sudden disappearance of the tribe and the apparent murder of the Chief, I thought it evident that their unceremonious departure was from fear of threatened disaster and that this place in the jungle was their secret meeting place for sacrifice and worship; that the High Priests, finding themselves unable to cope with the inevitable disaster, had put an end to their ruler by thrusting a spear into his skull and then had themselves been overcome by the dreaded calamity which was possibly no more nor less than a great army of vampires such as those already described in these pages.

CHAPTER 3.

THE next morning I planned a further sortie in the hope of bagging some big game. For three days following, four separate parties were sent scouting in various directions. At the end of that time I was so thoroughly disgusted with our lack of success that I determined to return to Makindu, to reorganize my safari and make a longer trek toward Moschi, from where we could gradually work toward and past the valleys and jungles buttressing the great mountain of Kilimanjaro and later push on to the Arusha district and eventually the Pangani River, as I understood these parts teemed with every kind of African big game, lions being particularly in evidence around Arusha.

Five days later I started off on my trek to Margardi, from which place I would branch off to the south again toward Kajiado, the habitat of the rhinoceros, the Thompson gazelle, the lion, giraffe, wild hog, zebra and kongoni—surely enough to satisfy the most eager of hunters!

From Margardi, we trekked south and a little west, heading for Kajiado, but came to a halt on reaching a small stream. At once I set the boys clearing a space from the thick scrub and tough grass in order to prevent the spread of fire and to save ourselves as much discomfort as possible from active and multitudinous insects, including ticks. As soon as camp was made and the cook had set up his pot in expectation, I started out accompanied by Capera and two other natives to secure meat. We had not far to go; there were quantities of small game, but I forbade the boys to kill more than our immediate needs called for.

On returning to camp, I found we had visitors. Masais and Nandys had arrived from their separate villages west of Kajiado. Having heard of our coming they had trekked long distances in hopes of joining our safari. There were ten men in all, young and splendid specimens, none less than five feet ten inches tall.

Each held his spear perpendicularly with one end sticking into the ground; their huge spears, I learned later, were especially adapted for hunting lions and other big game.

With these giant warriors had come a group of their women. I should have been somewhat prepared for the remarkable appearance of these strangely-bedecked women, as ever since arriving at Kilindini I had been regaled by native and European alike with stories of their strange customs. However, seeing them for the first time, I felt as though I were gazing upon a group of grotesque effigies.

They stood to one side of their men-folk, silent, making no movement excepting an occasional hoisting of either hip to shoot their offspring into a more comfortable position. They might have been a group of ugly, carven images. At first I did not realize what it was that made them look so grotesque and so different from other native women. Then I realized that it was the malformation of their ears. These hung down like black leather loops, reaching to their shoulders; attached to them were pieces of thin hide to which were suspended heavy dome-shaped shields of metal made from the coiling of wire, usually stolen from telegraph poles; these hung over each breast. Each wore a *kaross* thrown across one shoulder. On their arms from the wrists to the elbows, and on their legs from ankle to knee, they wore armour-like ornaments of steel, copper or brass.

Added to this heavy armour, most of them carried loads on their backs as well as a child on their hips. The load was supported by a broad band of hide passing around the forehead and brought back over the shoulders and there attached to the load. Naturally this caused quite a strain on the neck. The women were mostly thin and appeared to be poorly nourished. Comparing them with their lordly masters I thought what a miserable and undesirable looking lot of females they were. I use the term "lordly" in its fullest meaning, because the women-folk of the Nandys and Masais do all the work. They build the *bandos,* the floors of which are made of cow dung patted down with the bare hands and feet to the smoothness and hardness of linoleum. They also till the soil, care for the children and cattle and wait hand and foot upon their dignified husbands. The

"armour" spoken of consists of loop after loop of thick brass or copper wire bound around their forearms and legs; these loops can be removed only by filing or cutting. It is the custom to pierce the ear lobes of the girl babies, the holes being gradually stretched by forcing into them an object which is exchanged for another larger object every week or so until eventually, the girl having reached maturity, the lobe of the ear is as thin as an ordinary boot-lace and hangs well down on the neck.

The longer the lobe, the more beautiful they are considered by their men-folk, and if this can be termed beauty surely it is the only beauty these particular women possess. The dome-shaped shields already mentioned which hang from loops attached to the elongated lobes are held in place over the breasts by a piece of hide drawn across the chest fastened to both shields. The female head is shaved. Personally, I could find no redeeming feature about these women, excepting their unquestionable ability to work.

The Masais, and also the Nandys, have a peculiar custom which involves a minor operation on all the girls at the age of sixteen, the operation being performed by the old women of the tribe and resulting in quite a ceremony, which generally takes place on the banks of a river. Many girls undergo the operation at one time and although not dangerous it is nevertheless very painful. The patients are permitted to whimper or moan but should they call out or scream they are branded as cowards, unworthy of the name of Masai or Nandy, and irrevocably thrown out of the tribe as weaklings. This operation parallels that of circumcision in the male.

I can still picture in my mind's eye that night near the African jungle, within hearing of the lion's roar: the moon shedding a splendour of silvery light over the scene, the natives sitting around their camp, tired and hungry from the day's exertions, the enticing aroma of the venison just barbecued over our wood fires—whilst I, squatting on the ground with my back to some of our baggage, gripped with my two hands a ten-to-twelve inch piece of the roasted ribs of antelope and tore the meat from the bone with my teeth as only a hungry hunter can. I enjoyed it far more than the best banquet any more civilised part could

possibly have served me. After the feast the boys related legends; occasionally their deep mellow voices blended in the harmony of their native songs. As a grand climax, the Masai warriors brought the night's entertainment to a close with a series of war dances which can best be described as a succession of twistings, a frenzy of wild leapings, clashing of spears and shields, while they gave vent at the same time to fierce cries in weird, deep-throated minor keys—at one time the deeply-feared war cry of the Masais.

Africa had long since thrown her spell over me, but on this occasion she drew the charm just a little tighter. Having taken in this never-to-be-forgotten picture, I rolled over in my blankets in perfect contentment and slept soundly until sun-up.

Three days of uneventful marching over undulating plains covered with bush and sabre-like grasses, mosquito-infested, brought us to Kajiado, an elevation from which the surrounding country sloped gently away in all directions, at some points extending to the low valleys, at others, more distant, to the far away mountains. Here we made camp for a few days before setting out for the really big game country. Here was an abundance of good water and, just a half-mile west, the Masais and the Nandys had each a small village. To my great delight, I found patches of ground nearby which had been cultivated with vegetables. With liberal portions of snuff, salt and small trinkets I traded for some of these.

On several occasions I visited the two villages nearby. I learned much of the habits and customs of both Masai and Nandy in my conversations with their hunters and warriors. I learned from them the best locations for hunting and five or six days later decided to move on. Three of the Masais, whose credentials excelled those of their brothers, were added to our permanent personnel.

Descending to the lowlands we eventually came to a valley known as the haunt of the rhino. Here the boys were kept busy cutting paths through the dense vegetation until we reached the banks of the Pangani River. In this locality, on either side of the river, dense jungle reached back to approximately two miles. Here many animals came to drink. A short distance farther along we found a grassy space almost clear of trees; it presented an

excellent spot for our camp for as long as we remained in this district.

Having decided to build three *bandos* (native huts), I set the boys to work cutting down young saplings, trimming branches and gathering great quantities of vines and grass into bundles. For each *bando* six holes were dug to form a circle and into these saplings were placed, firmly upright. The two larger huts were to house the boys whilst the third and smaller one was for my personal headquarters.

After the saplings were placed in position the spaces between were filled with smaller branches which some of the boys plaited together with vines and leaves. Another gang wove a lacework of branches into a dome for the roof. When completed this was hoisted into position and firmly bound with more vines, after which more boys climbed aloft and finished the job of thatching it. For doors, more branches were criss-crossed and interwoven with vines, then swung into place and held there by stout lengths of illianas, which served as hinges. These doors were meant more as safeguards against unwelcome nightly visitors than to keep out the cold.

With Jacobus at the head of perhaps half the number of my boys, the next morning I followed the river in the direction of its source. As we passed under the trees on the brink of the water we were greeted by the excited jabberings of apes from overhead.

After having been on the tramp for several hours, a sudden commotion in the shrubbery directly ahead prompted me to spring hastily to one side. The boys jumped likewise and almost at the same instant a massive bull rhino came charging toward us, the muzzle of my rifle almost grazing its ear as it passed. Everything had happened in a flash; my shot had found its mark. Jacobus and Coat Tails fired at the same moment as the animal crashed, its impetus and great weight causing it to slide along the earth fully ten feet, flattening everything in its path.

It all happened so suddenly that I do not think a shout or a yell was uttered by any of us. I muttered something like: "Phew, that was a narrow squeak!" to Jacobus, after it was over. I set the boys to work chopping off the rhino's horn and lopping off a big toe, after which we returned to camp satisfied with our day.

Two weeks later, feeling now quite an experienced hunter, I planned a lion hunt, native style—that is to say, we hoped, with the assistance of our Masai warriors, Nandys, Kikuyus, Swahilis, and a couple of Somali boys, to bag a lion without shooting it.

All young men of the Masai and Nandy tribes are most anxious to join a lion hunt, the reason being that until they have done so they are not permitted to marry and until they have reached the age of eighteen they are not allowed to take part in a lion hunt; so it will be readily understood why all boys of these tribes are at eighteen bursting with enthusiasm to join a hunt.

The mode of procedure is to post the boys in a crescent-shaped formation. In this position they move stealthily toward the spot where the lion is in hiding. The young men are given the post of honour, that is, a few paces in front of the more seasoned warriors, in order that they may have the opportunity to be the first to stab at the lion with their heavy spears.

When eventually we did beat up a lion we were taken by surprise at being confronted by Mrs. Lion, as well as Leo himself; however, it was but a momentary surprise. The crescent line of natives, jumping and yelling in the wildest abandonment, brandished their spears, meanwhile drawing their lines into a closer circle. Closer and closer they drew until the animals, in utter bewilderment, did not know which way to turn. It was for this moment the warriors were waiting. With a concerted dash the young men rushed at the lions, stabbing at them furiously. Almost immediately the older warriors joined in and, within a few moments, both the lion and the lioness lay stretched lifeless before us. We had bagged our "lion" all right, though not exactly as we had planned. On this occasion, one of the young Masais suffered a badly-mauled thigh, whilst another boy had half the flesh torn from his right forearm. Fortunately these were the only mishaps.

I now turned my attention to the lower reaches of the river, where I had learnt there were even greater numbers of lions, giraffes and other big game. There were crocodiles also. Breaking camp, we sallied out toward Kahe, from whence we would make one big day's journey straight across country to touch the river again lower down. The proposed destination could be

reached by following the river, but as the Pangani hereabouts is very winding and makes a great bend, we could cut off at least two days' march by striking off across country in the open. We left mighty Mt. Kilimanjaro to our right which, although on the Equator, is covered with a mantle of snow and ice for 6,500 feet down from the summit all the year round. We had an excellent view of this majestic peak, and when we began travelling away from it Kilimanjaro seemed never to recede or diminish, but dominated and dwarfed our surroundings for days.

The country was difficult to traverse. On several occasions we were hard pressed to reach water for the night. On one such occasion two of my boys proved disloyal. Owing to the forced marches there were times when everyone's endurance and patience were tested to the utmost and some of the natives commenced spreading discontent. I had deliberately struck across a long stretch of arid country instead of following the river in order to save time. This act almost ended our little expedition. Before our journey was half over our water bottles were completely dry. The sun was scorching, but even so I could not understand how our water supply could have disappeared so suddenly. As I led the safari, always being some twenty yards ahead of the others, it was sometimes difficult to know just exactly what the boys were doing.

Toward three in the afternoon I called a halt and, beckoning Jacobus to my side, questioned him about the sudden disappearance of our water. Glancing behind him furtively,

"Baas," he stammered, "they know—I tell you—they cut my throat!"

"I'll take care of that, Jacobus," I reassured him. "Tell me."

"Well, Baas," he drawled, "Somalis make trouble with other boys for several days. Today, when you far ahead, two Somalis say that you no give dem enough water, so dey take some more and when other boys say dey will not drink some too, Somalis just take knife and say dey slit dere belly if dey tell. Baas, dey do it to me if dey know I tell. Dat is why water finish so quick, Baas."

Stealing water rations is one of the most serious crimes which can be committed in such a parched desert-like region.

Calling Coat Tails and Capera, I ordered them to gather the boys into a half circle about me. This done, I proceeded to harangue them on the crime of water stealing. I told them I knew water could not dry up so quickly and felt sure some of them had been stealing it. At this announcement there were covert glances at the Somalis. I informed them that I was about to put them each and all to an infallible test, the guilty one to be accorded punishment fitting such a crime. There were many grunts of assent at this. I thereupon began putting my test to work.

Starting at Capera's end of the line and taking his machet, I bade each one in turn to spit upon the knife. Everyone knows, of course, the effect which fear has upon the normal secretive action of the human system. My theory was that the fear of punishment would prevent the guilty ones expectorating freely. Aside from the test, however, I already knew the guilty ones.

The first Somali tested failed to expectorate at all. I requested him to try again. He managed a microscopical result. Pretending to inspect the blade with its offering, I stepped aside a few paces and, drawing my telescope from its case, went through the motions of gazing through it. Drawing my revolver, I turned swiftly and ordered the Somali to come forward.

He came with faltering steps looking abjectly guilty and exclaimed: "Bwana, you who know all."

Ordering Capera and Coat Tails to guard him while I went on with the test, I eventually reached the second guilty Somali. He was already a muddy green colour with fear but as if noticing nothing of betrayal in his appearance, I continued the examination and then ordered him to join his companion. I asked the remaining boys if they thought it just and fair that the culprits be dealt with in the usual manner and at once. The grunt of approval was unanimous. It was evident that the Somalis were not over popular with this crowd.

Drawing to one side I cogitated over the matter for a moment. I knew it was positively necessary for a white man in such a position to uphold his prestige in order to keep the obedience and respect of the natives, and it would not be done by showing leniency toward such a dastardly crime as stealing water. Should

I show too much mercy they would very soon take advantage, make me the slave and, in the end, probably desert if they did not actually butcher me before taking their leave. Gentleness and kindness toward the native in this part of uncivilised Africa can be entertained only after they have been made to understand for all time that their Bwana is absolute master.

Again addressing the boys, now squatting on their haunches, I pointed to the guilty Somalis. I said they had been good working boys and, therefore, I would give them the choice of being sent to the nearest town and probably going to jail, or taking ten strokes of the sjambok and a fine of one month's pay, the latter to be refunded should they prove good boys throughout the period of the expedition. Both immediately begged permission to take their punishment and assured me they would prove to "the Bwana" what good boys they could be. I thereupon bade Capera select two Masai warriors to inflict the penalty, hastily getting out of earshot myself. Suddenly, however, remembering the lateness of the day, I returned bidding Capera withhold the punishment for another time as it was now almost dark and I knew we must reach water before nightfall.

Off we trudged again with as much speed as our weary limbs could manage. The journey proved much longer than I anticipated and long before water was reached the black darkness of an African moonless night had fallen. Instinct rather than a sense of direction on the part of the natives and mules eventually guided us, stumbling and lurching like a group of drunken men, to the banks of the Pangani. Thank God, water! water, as much as we wanted, cool, clear, bubbling fresh water!

Our thirst satisfied, firewood, in spite of the impenetrable blackness of the night, must be gathered, for to camp here without fires would be courting certain disaster. Everyone, now hopefully looking forward to supper and a well-earned rest, worked generously and in no time there was piled up enough wood for the night. A thorn-bush barrier was thrown up as well as could be under existing circumstances.

After having seen all these preparations well on the way to completion I had just sat down beside my fire when I became aware of a pungent and most offensive stench. It pervaded the

place; it was overpowering, almost unbearable. What could be done? It was late and too dark to shift camp again, therefore I decided to endure it for the few remaining hours until daylight.

CHAPTER 4.

AS soon as I had eaten my supper and seen that all was snug for the night I turned into my blankets and must quickly have fallen asleep. But, so it seemed to me, I was immediately awakened by the roar of a lion sounding in my very ears. Springing up, I saw that the fires were all but out and the guards asleep. Leaping over, I awakened them with none too gentle a touch of my boot; feverishly they built up the fires, which soon gave out a big glare. Meanwhile, the lions continued their roaring and threshing round and round our ill-formed camp.

It sounded as if all the lions in Africa had been let loose. Occasionally we could catch the glint of their eyes in the firelight; their nearness was such that when a full-sized lion gave vent to a lusty roar we seemed to feel the very earth vibrate. This ferocious persistency of wild animals around a fire was contrary to all tradition; it flashed through my mind that perhaps that all-pervading odour had something to do with their attack.

Whenever I saw a pair of gleaming eyes shining from the blackness I let fly a shot, but every hunter, however experienced, knows the difficulty of accurate aim in darkness. To make matters worse I noticed by this time that our wood supply was running low, so selecting a few boys I instructed Coat Tails to take them and scratch together all the wood within reach without going outside the range of our firelight.

A few moments later, an agonising scream rent the air from the opposite side of the camp from where I was standing. Rushing over, I was met by several of the natives, who cried out that N'Gamine, the assistant cook-boy, was being attacked by a lion. Peering through the light and shadows, I saw the boy on the ground being viciously mauled by one of the largest lions I have ever seen. Manoeuvring until I could get a safe shot, at almost touching range, I emptied both barrels into the brute. Dragging

the carcase from the prostrate boy, I tore off my shirt and wrapped it around the boy's body in an attempt to staunch the flow of blood. Whilst kneeling at his side I ordered Capera and the other natives to continue throwing burning brands whenever the lions ventured too close.

Later I learnt that the boy had gone a bit too far from the fires in his effort to collect wood. The lion, at that precise instant, had made a phenomenal leap over the thorn-bush barricade in an effort to pounce upon Magnolia, my defenceless Abyssinian mule, but at the sudden and unexpected appearance of N'Gamine between him and the mule, it had, without warning, leapt upon the boy. His torso was ripped open from shoulder to waist, and the left hand practically torn off at the wrist. In a matter of moments he was mercifully released from his agony.

It was not until the faint streaks of dawn began to show through the trees that the lions stealthily slunk off into the jungle. Daylight showed us in what a ghastly place we had unknowingly made camp during the darkness. Perched in the trees above us were numerous big black-brown vultures which would look down upon us with unblinking eyes for hours, if not disturbed. As soon as it was light enough I started off towards the river for a wash and to quench my thirst. As I drew near the bank I saw a little to the right of our camp a partly-decomposed carcase of a kongoni from which the vultures, gripping with their talons and tearing with their beaks, were rending what flesh remained on the bones and gorging themselves. Returning to camp, I sent two boys to drag the carcase of the lion to the spot where lay all that remained of the kongoni, then gave instructions to move our camp away—anywhere but here. It was not until we began packing up that I discovered we had pitched our camp directly across the path which led to the lions' watering hole on the Pangani. Here, then, was the probable reason for the persistent attack of the previous night. This had proved to be a dearly-bought lesson, and I determined from now on that my camp site would be selected before sundown.

Moving some two miles from the scene of the previous night's terror, I decided to remain here another day to give the safari a well-deserved rest. Returning to the banks of the river, I found

the vultures had almost cleaned the flesh from the bones of the dead lion. Some of the repulsive-looking birds were so gorged that they were unable to lift themselves from the ground. Stepping up to them, I actually kicked several off the carcase of the lion, but they had so glutted themselves that they were too heavy to fly or even hop out of the way of my kick.

Our new camp was close to that part of the Pangani known to be infested with crocodiles; so I took the precaution, before venturing into the water, of first posting a native on either side and one at my back. The natives were armed with spears and the one at my back held a rifle. There were several places along the banks which had been eroded to such an extent as to form miniature lagoons known as crocodile pools. Thinking it might prove more exciting to hunt crocodiles than four-footed game, I decided to stay here for a few days.

The boys soon became proficient at spearing fish, but as they persistently stood on protruding bits of tree trunks or rocks out from the shore, I had constantly to warn them of the danger. My warnings had no lasting effect, for as soon as my back was turned they hopped out to their miniature islands again, making a very tempting bait for a waiting crocodile.

Returning from the river one day, with Jacobus bringing up the rear—for I seldom moved without him nearby—I was greeted by the natives' loud laughter, much joking and prancing about. Between guffaws they gesticulated toward a tree near at hand where I could see a baby giraffe was tied. The mother giraffe hovered over it, snorting and kicking out her legs in an exhibition of rampant rage. Capera informed me that the baby giraffe had aroused the boys from their afternoon siesta by gambolling about, so they had elected to catch the animal. They had tied it to the tree when the mother giraffe came galloping up in a terrific rage, the boys barely having enough time to scramble to safety before she began kicking out for all she was worth.

I stood watching mother and baby for a few minutes and noticed what a wonderful specimen she was. The thought tempted me that I should capture both now that it was such an easy matter. But what to do with them? Was I going to spoil my plans of several months' hunting in the country up north where

few, if any, white men had yet been? What might I not find up there in the Congo and in other remote parts of the vast territory I planned to explore? To give up all possibilities of coming adventures for a mere giraffe was out of the question; moreover, I was conscience-stricken at witnessing the distress of the mother as she ramped and tore, digging up the earth, rushing round and round, viciously lashing out her gangling legs, returning each moment and standing squarely over her young one.

Calling the boys, I bade them get to one side of the tree and beat off the mother with long stout branches. It took a lot of persuading to make her budge from the youngster and eventually we had to light some shrubbery in order to frighten her away. The instant she retreated I leapt in and slashed the rope from the baby's neck. Neither waited to show their gratitude but galloped off as fast as the youngster could keep pace with the parent.

We made many raids on the crocodile pools. One has to be wary on approaching the river, as the crocodiles enjoy sun baths on the banks, whilst incidentally waiting for a victim to pass by, and they can easily be mistaken for fallen tree-trunks. Another and even more unpleasant habit of this water beast is to carry his victim between his great jaws below the surface of the river, cram him into a niche or shallow cave, and there bury him in the mud until partly decomposed before devouring.

Growing tired of sitting on the bank waiting to aim pot shots at their smooth gliding snouts, I wandered back to camp and there, taking off my leggings, rolled them together to make a pillow preparatory to taking a catnap through the excessive heat of the afternoon. At that moment Capera called me to settle a petty dispute among some of the boys. On returning to my legging pillow, I was about to place my head upon it when the watchful Jacobus screamed a warning for me to look inside my leggings. Leaping to my feet, I held the leggings from me and shook them vigorously. Out dropped an immense scorpion. Its body must have been as broad as my hand. We made short work of it and right then I came very near to vacating the place but concluded that, after all, it was as good as any. How I wished afterwards that I had acted on that first impulse!

Forenoon of the following day found us en masse at the

river, determined to enjoy the sport of reducing the number of crocs. This was to be our last day here. The boys were perched everywhere, some spearing fish, others waiting with loaded rifles for the snout of a crocodile. Constantly I had to drive the boys away from flimsy supports which they heedlessly sought for their sport. A slip—and death was almost certain. I had just fired my first shot of the morning when a shriek from upstream reached my ears. Wheeling about, I saw several natives rushing toward a great thrashing of the water. Already Jacobus was winding long vines about his shoulders. One long vine hung free; this he thrust in my hand.

"All right, Baas, I get him. I swim plenty," he cried, and before I could stop him he had plunged headlong into the swirling river.

"Who slipped?" I asked, my eyes riveted on the receding Jacobus, my hands very carefully playing out the long vine.

"Coat Tails, Baas," was the breathless reply.

"Coat Tails!" I whispered to myself. It would have been hard enough to lose any of the boys, but the thought of the possibility of losing my two best boys in such a manner unnerved me. I was on the point of calling to Jacobus to swim back when the vine snapped some distance from shore, the swirl of the centre stream immediately gripping the luckless boy in a death struggle. Racing along the bank, I shouted what orders I could think of as a possible help. A dozen boys tore along at my side in frantic haste. We reached a slight bend in the river and looking toward the commotion in mid-stream, I saw a brown arm thrown suddenly into the air. At the instant I took it to be Jacobus, but almost immediately saw his curly black head bob up a few yards further back. If I could reach the end of that vine I might yet save him!

Slinging off my boots and bandolier, I prepared to plunge into the water, but Capera and several of the others made to hold me back. Kicking them savagely aside I ordered them to follow. I jumped in, swimming with all my strength for the end of the vine. With a final burst I was at last able to grasp it, but came very near being dragged into centre stream myself. It took all my remaining strength to hold my position. I yelled to Capera,

already on his way, to grasp the hand of the boy behind him and thus, with the boys following, make a human rope. After what seemed an age he at last grasped my foot, then all pulling gently on the vine, we gradually brought Jacobus safely to shore.

But Coat Tails, poor devoted Coat Tails, was lost to us for ever.

I turned my attention to Jacobus who, after a good rubbing-down and a tot from my flask, was none the worse for his experience. Ordering everyone to camp, I threatened to sjambok the first one whom I caught near the river again unless especially sent there for water supplies. I gave instructions to Capera to prepare for moving off at sunup and then made for my bivouac, maybe to rest, but not to sleep after this day's happenings.

CHAPTER 5.

FOUR days' steady marching brought us to Lake Jipe, which lies a little to the north of Moschi. It is a comparatively small lake, it offers good fishing and plenty of small game can be had in its vicinity. Near to its southern bank are two Masai villages. The country recedes from Lake Jipe in gentle slopes, terminating in a low range of mountains. A belt of thick grass and reeds fringes most of the shore surrounding Lake Jipe. In this terrain we were very wary of treading on reptiles as this was obviously the habitat of the green mamba. Personally I never ventured on hidden ground without leggings; I would much rather meet a lion than any of the creeping, crawling horrors seldom seen until one has stepped on them and been stung or bitten. Even the small black ant hereabouts has a bite which feels like a searing with a hot needle.

Another constant pest is the chigger flea, a microscopic insect which prefers, as its favourite boring place, the underside of one's toenail. Once sufficiently deep into the skin of its victim, it starts laying its quota of eggs per toe. These tiny eggs are almost invisible to the naked eye and are enclosed in a tiny silken sac. The victim's toe becomes inflamed and, when irritated almost beyond endurance, the head boy is called and ordered to excavate. He sets to work in this manner: his already sharp and pointed knife is sharpened again and he begins cutting and probing about the infected parts until he is able to lift the tiny pod of eggs out whole. These chiggers and the tsetse flies, reinforced by myriads of mosquitoes, are but a few of the things which keep the explorer in Central Africa from being lonesome.

On one occasion whilst sitting on the platform of a small siding on the Uganda Railway, waiting for a train to take me north, I noticed a huge black centipede wriggling across a rail. At that moment a train passed, cutting the centipede in two.

Jacobus and I, with our feet dangling over the platform, were fascinated by the struggling movements of its severed body. With laborious efforts the centipede slowly, but surely, got its two parts little by little nearer together, then after what seemed an interminable time of struggling, the two pieces joined forces and, so it seemed to us, knitted themselves together before our very eyes. Aghast with amazement, we saw the centipede slowly wriggle off into the grass, apparently alive and mended.

Borrowing a dugout belonging to the Masais, we had several days of good fishing on Lake Jipe. On one of my hunting trips nearby, I came near to being mauled when, wandering too far from camp, I suddenly realized that daylight was fading quickly. Turning about, we immediately made for camp, which was probably three miles off. I was a few paces ahead of the boys and, in my anxiety to get back to camp before darkness fell, I had thoughtlessly relaxed my vigilance, when suddenly a fearful roar sounded almost in my face. A few yards away stood a lion ready to pounce. As he lifted his taut, sinuous body for the leap, there came from over my shoulder the crashing, double report of Jacobus' rifle. It was a close shave and for the moment all I could do was to grip the shoulder of my faithful Jacobus and pat his cheek in gratitude.

We had now been out from Margardi about three weeks and I had made my schedule to be back there in one month; therefore to be on time to pick up my other boys I must return without further delay. The Masais turned out en masse to wish us a safe journey and loaded the boys of my safari down with vegetables, bananas and mangoes, and amidst a deluge of kindly shouts and laughter we set out for Margardi.

Going back a little east of Kajiado, we passed through a district known as Lol Kisali and from thence direct to Margardi Siding on the Uganda Railway.

After two days' rest, I was ready to entrain the safari for Lake Victoria Nyanza, where they would endeavour to embark on a lake boat for Bukoba on the south-west shore, there to await my coming about two weeks later, as it was my intention to stop at Nairobi (capital of Kenya) to attend to business matters and arrange for supplies. I gave careful instructions to Capera about

getting across the Lake and making a permanent camp in as favourable a site as could be found some four or five miles south-west of Bukoba, where he was to stack our provisions and camp equipment. When all was completed he was to make inquiries regarding my friend, Antoine Paul Vosion, who presumably had been there for some seven or eight months and who, I fondly hoped, would be of a mind to join my expedition, which would ultimately, if all went well, reach near the north-western borders of the Congo.

From that distant and little known hinterland had come many strange tales of wild cannibal tribes and fierce lawless natives who, ostracized from various tribes within and surrounding the Congo, had sought the vast unknown wilderness to escape their possible punishment from governments under whose rule their particular tribe came. There were also strange stories of pygmies, immense gorillas, and herds of elephants led by giant tuskers. Giving Capera a few last instructions, I climbed into a coach and slept until awakened at Nairobi.

. . . . . .

Nairobi is about five thousand feet above sea level and is always cool at night. It was a flat and uninteresting town then, but having seen it several years later I concede the marvellous change—made streets, substantial and artistic governmental buildings, more Europeans. Many of the Indians who had been content to squat in their oven-like shacks now have solidly-built stores and drive about in automobiles, while their underlings dispense their wares. Most of these Indians of former days are now wealthy nabobs of this city.

Nairobi is a healthful spot, fevers being practically unknown, though only a short distance outside the town there are many places where blackwater or malarial fevers are prevalent. Coffee beans, sisal and tobacco are the principal products and fruit-growing is popular. However, the planter must ever be on the watch for the wild pig—destroyer of many a good crop. This pestiferous beast gives the planter all the big game hunting he desires right within his own boundaries.

Making final arrangements for later shipments of provisions, medicines and ammunition to be forwarded, I bade my friend adieu and entrained for Entebbe on the western shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza, where I was obliged to wait two days for the lake dhow. Under a favourable wind the little vessel made progress for Bukoba.

There followed three days of enchanted sailing; nothing called for exertion and since no haste on my part could speed our progress I was content to lounge about the deck, gazing at the sails bellying out overhead against the burning sky. In this part of Africa the glare of the sun is so intense that the heavens are like a burnished canopy of brass streaked with turquoise blue which fuses indelibly into the mind. Sleepily I dreamed of my meeting with Antoine as the lap, lap of the waves against the old lake dhow intermingled with the mellow harmony of the natives' voices chanting their tribal legends.

Then, all too soon, Bukoba!

Before reaching the tiny makeshift of a wooden jetty, Jacobus began gesticulating. "There! There!" he shouted in my ear.

Following his directions I caught sight of Capera's tall figure among the horde of struggling natives who had gathered on shore for the arrival of the dhow. Springing ashore, I pushed my way toward him, gave him a slap on the shoulder and burst forth with the greeting: "Well, Kapita!" a term used instead of "Saidi" (head boy of the porters) and which conferred upon him the honour of being headman. The title greatly pleased Capera, who conveyed to me the information that the boys were all well. His joy at my safe arrival was like that of a guileless school-boy. Our camp, I learnt, was three miles to the south-west. To inquiries as to the possible discovery of my friend, M. Vosion, Capera stated:

"Yes, Bwana, he go one month to hunt, west shore Lake Kivu. His camp one half hour south of our camp."

To the west of Lakes Kivu and Edward, mountain ranges, thrusting their rugged peaks skywards, could plainly be seen in the luminary refulgence existing here, perhaps hiding secrets I hoped to be the first white man to discover. I already knew that somewhere midst the fastnesses of that mighty mass were the

Buhuni cannibals and a little beyond them various tribes of Bantus and Pygmies of the seemingly limitless Itura Forest.

Farther to the north is Ruwenzori, 17,893 feet and flowing from its northern extremity and slightly west of this great mountain is the Semliki River, the valley of which is a pestiferous locality of sleeping sickness and tsetse fly.

The extensive terrain was the playground of the elephant, lion, leopard and gigantic gorillas, as also that to be feared most of all—the haunts of lawless tribes.

CHAPTER 6.

THE next morning Jacobus had taken upon himself the responsibility of letting me sleep, for it was well after sunup when I heard his usual stage whisper of "cub-of-corphy, Bwana." Leaning over on one elbow and wriggling it into the ground for comfort, whilst sipping the welcome eye-opener, I started thinking over the past few days of unexpected surprises. One feature of the situation was that there appeared no further need for qualms regarding the boys' loyalty and courage.

However, I decided there would be ample time before Antoine's arrival, and before finally setting out on the lesser known part of my journey, to stiffen up the boys' stamina by taking the safari for a few more days' hunting in this new region and also, of course, to augment our larder.

For five days, during which we travelled a considerable distance nearer the great barrier of mountains facing us, we had varying luck, but toward the end we had enough dried venison to provide, if necessary, for weeks ahead.

Two weeks passed in this manner, during which an exciting and quite unforeseen incident occurred. As will later be seen, it had a definite influence on my projected journey—indeed, upon the whole of my life.

Occasionally in the distance, through my glasses, I saw families of lions gambolling about much the same as families of the domestic cat do; a few ungainly giraffes craning their chimney-like necks for a peep at the intruders and then tearing off in what seemed a series of undetermined directions, and in the operation spreading their long legs out in rude, convulsive jerks, as if desirous above all things of shedding their oversize hooves. Great herds of kongonia, zebra and impali were seen from time to time as we pushed our way towards a point south-west of Lake Victoria Nyanza.

"Build up the fire, Jacobus. After our long trek of to-day I feel like getting some sleep. We must be up early tomorrow to build a couple of *bandos*."

"Ndyo, Bwana, you is right. We am plenty tired."

Hoisting another big branch into the fire with his huge calloused feet, Jacobus rolled over. I sank a little lower on my water-proof sheet and must have instantly fallen asleep.

It was possibly but a few moments later that I found myself sitting bolt upright, every faculty alert. Looking across the fire, I saw that Jacobus was gone. My ears, keenly attuned to the sounds of the jungle, detected a faint threshing sound coming from the dense elephant grass. Snatching my rifle up I dashed forward just in time to catch a fleeting glimpse of a small animal gliding out of sight.

I was on the point of firing my rifle as a signal when, to my intense relief, I saw Jacobus staggering out of the high blanket of grass with an inert black figure over his shoulders. As he staggered inside the barricade the light of the camp-fires fell on his burden of a native fully as big and as black as himself. After helping Jacobus lower him gently to the ground and making a hurried examination, I found that the man's neck, chest and back had been horribly torn. Putting my ear to the lacerated chest I detected a faint heart-beat.

"Jacobus, bring hot water and bandages, upazi!"

Dropping a few crystals of permanganate of potash into the bowl of water Jacobus had brought, I began swabbing the wounds, the native having already lost a tremendous amount of blood. So intent had I been on binding up the poor fellow's wounds with the hastily improvised bandages, that it was not until I turned to Jacobus for an explanation that I noticed Capera and the others had silently gathered around, sympathetically watching.

"Me not sure yet, Bwana," Jacobus answered. "When I reach him he say, 'Me, M'Golomba.' Then he point to big leopard with a spear in him. Leopard not yet dead, kick much 'cause spear go deep. M'Golomba speak no more."

"A fine job on our hands!" I muttered. "What are we going to do with him? If he survives the horrible tearing the leopard

gave him, it would take us at least eight or ten days to get him to the nearest settlement."

"Ndyo, Bwana, but M'Golomba not live so long, he die before sunup."

"What makes you so sure of that, Jacobus?"

"'Cause, Bwana, it am so. He die soon."

Upon this point I, too, had little doubt; but lacking the natives' stoicism toward death, I unpacked my personal kit, from which I unearthed a long-forgotten flask, and forced a few drops of the precious brandy down the native's throat, wondering as I did so how in the name of Heaven the fellow had survived, for even such a brief time, such terrible punishment.

Jacobus and Capera, at my suggestion, gathered leaves and grass which they made into a cushioned couch covered by one of my blankets. Together they gently lifted the injured man and laid him carefully upon the improvised mattress. Again I forced a few drops of brandy between the now tightly-clenched teeth and continued my unskilled but gentle bandaging. At last, having finished all that was humanly possible to do for the unfortunate fellow, I rose, washed my hands, and then instructed Jacobus to call me if any change occurred.

A few hours later I sat up. Staring around, I felt relieved to feel that the tugging at my sleeve was not the tearing claws of a leopard, as I had dreamed, but merely Jacobus' persistency, announcing that my coffee was ready.

"You was dreaming, Bwana. I try to wake you for a long time."

"Why didn't you wake me long ago, Jacobus? It's broad daylight! We should have started building those *bandos* long since." Then, suddenly remembering, and looking over to the couch of leaves, I was startled to see it empty.

"Where is he?" I asked.

"Palela," Jacobus said softly. "We bury him early, just before sunup, Bwana."

"Why didn't you call me?"

"Well, Bwana, I no like to wake you again, so Capera, Shauri and I work and we finish it before I make your coffee."

"But, Jacobus," I angrily remonstrated, "I instructed you to

call me if anything happened. Did he regain consciousness? Did he speak?"

"Ndyo, Bwana, he spoke, and after he tell Jacobus he just went like this—" and flattening his hands out smoothly Jacobus indicated that the man had passed on quietly and suddenly.

"I understand so far, Jacobus," I said impatiently, "but what did he tell you? Out with it!"

A long pause followed my query, during which Jacobus fell into a study of the heavens. I knew that it would be fatal to interrupt him as it would only mean a much longer wait while the native once more readjusted his thoughts.

Jacobus sat motionless except for an occasional pursing of his lips from which he emitted, with unerring aim, a thread-like stream of snuff-laden saliva at a tormenting mosquito. Then, as I stirred impatiently, the native's voice droned out over the grey of the early African morn.

"Well, Bwana, after I sit and watch M'Golomba for long time, he open his eyes. I hold up my pannikin of coffee and M'Golomba he try to make tiny smile for Jacobus, but him too weak to drink, so I steal the Bwana's flask and give few drops to M'Golomba just like the Bwana did."

"But why didn't you call me as I instructed?" I demanded. "Perhaps I could have obtained some valuable information from him. Well, it can't be helped now. All right, go on, Jacobus."

At this well-earned rebuke, Jacobus looked a little crestfallen, but after a moment or two continued his story. "Soon after M'Golomba get the brandy he grow a little stronger and ask about me. I tell him how I found him and how my Bwana had treated his wounds and did all he could to make him comfortable and ease his pain. And that it was my Bwana's medicine from his flask that make him stronger and able to talk a little now."

"And then, did he speak?"

"Yah, Bwana, M'Golomba whisper for Jacobus to stand closer. It was hard for him to speak, but after a little time he make me promise, on my life, that if he told me a great secret I would tell no one 'cept my Bwana. Then M'Golomba told me . . ."

"Well, Jacobus," I prodded. "What is holding you back? On with your story."

"Ndyo, Bwana, I want and I no want to tell. Jacobus is kitisho. Maybe it am no good for my Bwana to know all M'Golomba say. But if the Bwana say I must then Jacobus tell."

"Well, for goodness sake get on with it," I urged.

"He tell me that he, M'Golomba, the swiftest of Chief M'Balamingo's message runners had brought news to M'Balamingo on his return from the country beyond the border of the Great Falling Waters to his *bando* at Kwasha in South Tanganyika."

"Stop a moment, Jacobus," I interrupted. "During M'Golomba's talk with you he spoke of the 'Great Falling Waters.' Did he mention the Congo?"

"Ndyo, Bwana, he did."

"Then he must have meant the Stanley Falls!" I mused. "All right, go on."

"Well, Bwana, M'Golomba told me that the natives from a land far north and west ob de many trees land carry stones of big beauty and value to Arab traders along the shores of the Great Sailing Waters, which they change for machets, brass and copper wire, beads, cloth and salt. The stones, he said, were given to trusted messengers by the little people, tallest of whom would not reach the middle of an ordinary sized native."

I laughed incredulously at this version of the size of the little people. There was no doubt whatever in his own mind that M'Golomba had been referring to the Congo Pygmies who, although diminutive, were decidedly taller than his waist line.

"Jacobus, I was thinking how much like your baby piccaninnies these little people must be."

"Yah, Bwana, they is. M'Golomba say they is no bigger than our babies but, although they is so tiny, the carriers of the bright stones always fear dese piccaninny people."

"There was one or two times," he continued, "when a carrier cheat. Then quick death come to him; also, every member of his family is soon palela. When? None ever knew. But, always, they knew how. All were poisoned. By what? None ever learned. Always they were found much discoloured and with bellies distended to a great fatness." His big black hands circled his middle expressively.

"But Jacobus, why do the Congo Pygmies depend upon

other tribesmen instead of trading direct with the Arabs themselves?"

"'Cause, Bwana, so M'Golomba say, they is afraid that some day those greedy Arabs will find their hiding place. The carriers themselves are to be trusted as they still 'member the vengeance of the Pygmies. One of the runners who was saved from death by M'Golomba told him about the stones. He said they shone like white, green, red and blue stars, and would buy from the Arabs many shawls, beads, knives, salt and wire. Bwana, if you could find stones like those of the little people we could some day buy a *bando* as big as the great Chacka's and have as many wives as Lobenglu, after him, had."

Throwing the dregs of my billy-can into the smouldering embers, a moment later I was in the act of picking up my blanket and waterproof sheet, but suddenly stopped. Instead, I stooped to snatch up something from the ground, then sitting down on my blanket, I carefully opened the little rawhide pouch I had found.

"Phew!" I whistled as I tipped into my hand several stones of irregular shape, size and colour. I sat wide-eyed and open-mouthed, just looking.

"Wealth enough here to pay all my expenses for a long time," I thought.

It had been my intention to camp here for a few days but this first night of unusual incidents, plus the misery endured by myriads of mosquitoes, definitely dispelled such an ambition. My arms, face and neck looked and felt as if I had been attacked by a swarm of hornets. Organizing three groups of boys, I sent them scouting in different directions for higher and more suitable ground for a camp site.

Soon one of these groups returned bringing with them a tall, splendidly-proportioned Kikuyu. They had seen him travel ling in the direction of the Great Lake. Being alone, they had asked the stranger for information about the surrounding territory and invited him to come back to camp for an interview with their Bwana. I questioned the stranger regarding the terrain toward the yet distant Ruhanda, and learned that a little more than half-a-day's trek westward would bring us to Lake Mohazi. There,

he informed me, we would find an abundance of fish, and plenty of game came to drink early in the morning and at night. There were no mosquitoes and the nights were cool.

I asked the Kikuyu if he was making any special journey.

"Nydo, Bwana," he replied. "I was just going to visit my *umfazi*. She has *bando* with her mother up near Arusha."

"Where did you learn to speak English?" I asked.

"In the Mission at Voi. I speak also some other talks of the natives who live back dar," he replied, pointing his long black finger in the direction of the Congo.

I contemplated the possibility of adding such an unquestionable asset to my safari, and after further discussion of wages and other details, I eventually added the name of Kobanzi to the roster of my personnel. No sooner was this matter settled than I gave orders to vacate this spot at once. By four in the afternoon I caught my first glimpse of the small, but beautifully located, Lake of Mohazi.

A site was selected and then the entire personnel of the safari, with the exception of Capera the cook, went to work with such a will, erecting temporary *bandos*, that well before darkness all was snug for the night.

Sleep was a long time in coming to me that night. Jacobus' story, with all the frills and superstitions that only a native can give, occurred and reoccurred to my mind. Stones shining like stars—red, green, white and blue . . .

I actually possessed some now to show that it was no idle dream. There must be some truth in Jacobus' vague account of Chief M'Balamingo's runner. Could I learn in exactly what part of the little known Congo those extremely small Pygmies were located? It was doubtful, I decided; just another myth born of the African native's love of the sensational.

Jumping up I savagely kicked the smouldering fire into life. Never before had the recitation of a native's tale possessed the power to upset me in this manner, and yet, I had to admit to myself that this was different. It rang with possibilities and had the probability of truth in it.

Rousing Jacobus with a jolt, I bade him build up the fire "big and plenty." When he had finished I bribed him into

loquaciousness by giving him a liberal portion of snuff. Slipping it into the crook of his index finger, he plastered it around the gums of his lower jaw instead of sniffing it up his nose like his white brother of distant lands.

Telling him to squat by the fire I explained that I wanted to know all the particulars of his story, every little detail and name he could think of in connection with it, especially the name and location of the Pygmies' domain.

"Just try very hard, Jacobus, to remember whether M'Golomba told you about any of the Pygmies' customs or language, the name of the tribe or anything at all which could help identify them or their exact location."

"The name, Bwana? Sio, Bwana, I don't 'member. I don't think M'Golomba ever told me, perhaps he never heard it."

"He must have been told!" I replied impatiently. "Think, Jacobus, try to remember. M'Golomba told you himself that chief M'Balamingo had sent an expedition to capture one of those stone carriers and force them to divulge the source of the stones."

"Ndyo, Bwana, but I forget whether M'Golomba told me." Jacobus' loquacity of the previous evening had changed to strange reticence. After a very long pause, however, he said:

"Wait Bwana, I seem to 'member that he did talk something 'bout a river and the north part of the Congo."

"Yes, yes," I encouraged. "Perhaps the name of the river will come to your mind presently."

"Yah, Bwana, maybe the coffee will help when I make it. Already I begin to 'member that M'Golomba say something about the bad man lands of the Congo. Did you say, Bwana, as you had miningi snuff for Jacobus?"

"Yes, as much as you will need, and when we return from the land of the Pygmies I'll give you enough to last you the rest of your life."

"But Bwana, I no want to go, it is very far; such a safari am very dangerous; there are cannibals there, and the Congo Pygmies of the Kubwa Juitu, and after that the bad men of the bad lands of the north Congo. Bwana, please don't go. I work here for half wages, Bwana. Here there is peace, plenty game and much room to travel about in."

"Jacobus, it's no use. Bad men of the Congo, Pygmies of the Itura Forest, or wild animals will not stop me. I shall go, and find out for myself whether the story of the Pygmies having a hidden treasure of bright stones is exaggerated or not."

"If the Bwana no get there how he know if M'Golomba's story true or not?" interrupted Jacobus.

"Whether I return or not, Jacobus, I'll settle once and for all whether it's all a pack of lies or the truth. And, Jacobus, if it is true, then you will be able to return to your own village and buy as many *umfazis* as Solomon had!"

"Eh, Bwana, who am Solomon? And how many did he have?"

"Jacobus, stop questioning and hand me that coffee."

"Ndyo, Bwana, here it am. Bwana did you say as I would get some stones or money if I went with you?"

"No, Jacobus, what I said was, that if we found the place where the stones are and still were, I would make you rich."

"Good coffee, eh, Bwana? I seem to 'member something 'bout those two rivers which M'Golomba told me 'bout."

Looking up sharply I caught a fleeting look of restraint on Jacobus' face. There was little doubt that he was withholding something important. What unknown menace could so affect the Jacobus that I knew so well. "Jacobus, you have been with me ever since I came to Africa six and a half years ago."

"That am true, Bwana."

"I have always paid you well, and never broken a promise to you, but now that the moment has come when you might repay me for my kindness you withhold information from me. So, Jacobus, as you do know the location of the Pygmies, it will be best, after all, for you to go back to your village. I can select a boy to take your place from those I chose for my safari."

At this threat Jacobus looked up with a scared expression; glancing from left to right and around in every direction, as if trying to see what might be hidden beyond the barricade, he whispered: "Bwana, your life and Jacobus' will be in danger if I tell you any more."

"Bah!" I snorted. "Don't you want to buy cattle and a big *bando* for your new *umfazi?* Are you still the great grandson of

the mighty Kobinzoba, or has the fear of a people who are possibly harmless made a coward of you and turned your blood to water?"

"Bwana, I'm no coward. Did I not save your life?"

"Very true, Jacobus," I replied. "But this is different. You fear—*what?*"

"Well, Bwana, let me tink a minute." And the big fellow, with his can of coffee between his feet, made himself comfortable for another oration.

"Ndyo, Bwana, I am still the great grandson of Kobinzoba, but Bwana, that carrier, the one who told M'Golomba about the Pygmies' stones, was dead a few days later—mysteriously palela. M'Golomba say he, too, was found with big fat belly. Bwana, Jacobus am now the last one who knows."

"Ah then, Jacobus, you *do* know?"

"Ndyo, Bwana, I know the place where the Pygmies is; but Jacobus knows that if him tell you, you will lose your Jacobus—palela, upazi too.

Crouching beside the fire, as close to me as he could get without actually touching me, he went on, "Bwana, the Pygmies' domain am terribly hard to reach. No one am ever returned who went to find them, and before getting there one must fight their way through jungle lands full of savage, warlike peoples—but—" and again Jacobus glanced furtively around, "Bwana, bend down. I will whisper where Chief Loba-Komba's tribe am. Bwana, M'Golomba tell me they are the most piccaninni of all Pygmies, and if I must tell Bwana, I better tell now so we can go quickly away from this place which, I know, is hiding evil voodoo for Jacobus. I take to M'Golomba the Bwana's pannikin so I could make markings on it with a burnt stick. M'Golomba whisper to me how I must make mark which he call the River Bili, and 'nother little farther north which he call Mbubu. Then he tell me to make a straight line at the other end which he call Banzali."

"Did he tell you, Jacobus, whether the Pygmy village was nearer to the River Bili or closer to the Mbubu River?"

"No, Bwana, M'Golomba say the journey between the two marks would take about two moons safari; not because of the distance but 'cause the country am very difficult and full of

unfriendly tribes. He tell me to make a ring 'bout halfway from Bili to Banzali which him say am the village of the Pygmies. M'Golomba say from their high hills of lookout they can see far to the north great high lands of 'nother people. That, Bwana, am all I know."

"That must be close to the northern border of the Congo and French Equatorial Africa," I remarked, "and from all accounts, it's the wildest and most inaccessible part of all Africa. We would face at least six months of great hardships and dangers to get there. Jacobus, I have determined to go on, even if I have to go alone, and because of the unusual danger of such a journey, Jacobus, I will not insist on your coming."

"Bwana, you is right, we might as well go. Bwana, we go together."

Our third day here, natives of the surrounding country gradually became bold enough to visit the outskirts of our camp. Finding us friendly, each succeeding night saw more and more of them gathering, even around our camp-fires.

During one of the evening *indabas,* I learned with surprise and intense curiosity that, with few exceptions, the natives of these parts would endure the scorn of their tribesmen, and the humiliation which warriors of their tribes suffer who engage in the menial task of building huts, attending the crops, and other such work usually done by their women-folk, rather than scale the escarpment north-west of the Ruhanda and enter that part, particularly, of the Congo for which we were bound. Their reluctance to travel into the Congo by this route, for real or imaginary reasons, was, for me, difficult to understand. Whenever questioned on this subject, they merely shrugged and avoided answer. Naturally, such evasiveness increased my curiosity as also my determination to solve the mystery.

Toward sunset one evening I instructed Jacobus to select two or three of the more intelligent Kikuyus for an *indaba* around my fire that night, and to bring the newly-found Kikuyu as interpreter. In the meantime, the cook prepared extra food, and in preparation of an extra big *indaba* I selected from our bundles a few coils of bright copper wire, some beads, and a few small pocket mirrors.

The moon was full, the atmosphere clear, visibility excellent. Far to the north-west we could see the faint outline of the southern tip of the Mountains of the Moon. Close at hand were the clear reflecting waters of our own little lake.

Beyond the focus of our camp-fire, however, anything might be lurking in the dense underbrush and tall, saw-edged elephant grass. Further off, elusive shadows enshrouded the fringe of the jungle. Not far from our fire, an impromptu gathering of native visitors had assembled. Large fires had been built close together in a *donga,* thereby forming a natural amphitheatre. Naked, but for their abbreviated breech-clouts, spearmen squatted several rows deep around an inner circle; beyond the circle were tier upon tier of them standing on the outer fringes. Silence had fallen over the assembly as if something of importance was expected. Then an almost inaudible chant stirred murmuringly on the still night air, mellow voices softly blending. The chanting gradually grew in volume, filling the air with mystifying melody. It grew until it suddenly burst into a thunderous crescendo, the climax of which was reached in perfect unison by the warriors clashing spear to shield as they made prodigious leaps into the air. The night vibrated with unreality. As if guided by one mind the concourse softly glided back into their former positions of squatting or standing—and again the night was silent.

From shadows beyond the gleam of the camp-fires strode a white-bearded regal-looking native, tall and powerfully built. He was followed to the centre of the improvised amphitheatre by several heavily-armed warriors. Erect, he proudly stood as stately as the giant trees of his native jungle. At his feet his men deposited game fresh from the hunt—buck and impali, luscious golden bananas, pomegranates, mangoes, yams and calabashes overflowing with berries.

He spoke to me in an unknown tongue. Kobanzi, my interpreter, quickly informed me that the speaker was the Paramount Chief of this district. He had come on a visit of welcome, and to show his friendship had brought fresh provisions, for the preparation of which he placed at my disposal several women of his own *bomba.*

Turning to Jacobus I gave instructions for him to entertain

at his own camp-fire the three Kikuyus; then, bidding my interpreter follow, I stepped into the centre circle of the now silent, but tensely expectant, assemblage of natives.

Stopping a few paces in front of the Chief, I held my hands out in a gesture of greeting, at the same time telling my boy what to say in the way of thanks for this unexpected visit and largesse.

At the conclusion of my impromptu speech, M'Abuta—for that, I learnt, was his name, Chief of the Ruhanda Masais—gave an order to the women he had brought along. Quietly but speedily, they set about their preparations for the feast, and almost before M'Abuta and I had time to exchange a few pleasantries, the welcome aroma of sizzling venison over greenwood fires wafted our way.

As soon as everyone had had his fill, the warriors moved back to make a larger circle.

Suddenly, six warriors armed with shields and spears leaped into the clearing, three on either side, facing each other; and again a soft murmur of voices arose. Gradually it increased, then came a gentle tapping of bare feet and hands on the soft earth, the movements became more rapid, then developed into a stamp, stamp, stamp, until the earth shook. The jungle echoed the weird sounds. Then the fierce war-cries of the Masai and Nandy warriors were simultaneously unleashed into a blood-curdling bedlam; their dancing had become demoniacal. A thundering crash of spears against shields was the climax and signal for the six motionless warriors in the centre circle to spring into their make-believe, but, to an onlooker, very realistic, attack on each other.

To the uninitiated it appeared impossible for the participants to escape unscathed. At the moment when the mock battle raged its fiercest, an order was roared out by the old Chief. Instantly the fighters stood motionless as if turned into bronze statues in fighting pose; thus they stood for a half-minute, proudly conscious of the superb picture they made, then, with loud guffaws of laughter they joined their comrades, with whom they pranced about like a lot of happy children.

M'Abuta and I, for the first time since our early greetings, now had the opportunity of further conversation. Kobanzi sat at

my feet, keenly watching every movement and gesture of M'Abuta as if gaining inspiration to understand better and so enable him to translate fully the old Chief's every word. After reiterating his friendship, M'Abuta hunted around in his native vocabulary for a polite way of asking where I was journeying and for what purpose. After half-an-hour's such preambling on his part, I eventually learned what the wily old Chief was trying to find out.

In a few words I explained my intention of trekking into the Congo where I had been informed the rare and elusive okapi might be found, and suggested that possibly Chief M'Abuta could help me select the best routes and sections of the Congo most favourable for my quest.

For a few moments M'Abuta sat silent, motionless, hands clasped across his bulging belly, looking off into the outer darkness as if trying to visualize far-off scenes and places, or perhaps, incidents of past glory enacted by his Masai *impi*. At last, turning to me, he gazed with such penetrating directness that I had the uncanny feeling he knew that I was lying.

For a few tense moments we faced each other, neither wavering. Suddenly M'Abuta said, "I came as your friend. Why treat me like a child? You don't know it has long been revealed to M'Abuta what your real mission to the Congo is!"

"No, I did not know until now," I replied, "since it is only a few moments ago that I told you."

Impatiently M'Abuta stamped his bare feet; clapping his hands, he relapsed into his comfortable paunch-embracing position. A forbidding silence ensued; then, as if having dropped from the sky, the repellant figure of a fetish man stood before the Chief. No word had been uttered, yet it seemed to me that some occult message beyond my understanding had passed between them; the medicine man appeared to acquiesce to an order.

A few paces back, the execrable creature now knelt on the ground. Feverishly he commenced taking various articles from his loin cloth, amongst which were skeletons of reptiles and small animals, tiny skin packages containing powders and berries, and a gourd partly filled with fluid. Into the gourd he dropped what appeared to be a few berries and some powder; whilst stirring this concoction, he kept up a monotonous chant.

Nothing happened that I could discern. My Kikuyu boy, however, began to show unmistakable signs of agitation, and after a few tense moments whispered: "Bwana, we had best get away from here quickly; I don't like the looks of that voodoo maker!"

Holding up my hand for silence, I shook my head negatively. I was determined to see whatever they were up to, though. The chanting now developed into a cadence of pleading supplication. The fetish man's voice pitched a little higher; it became stronger, fiercer, even threatening, then demanding, ordering.

My eyes now became riveted upon a green smoky glow rising from the gourd, the stirring of which by the magician grew ever more rapid. His incantations became jumbled, incoherent mouthings. Suddenly, he screeched more shrilly. The climax of his exhortations was reached by an ear-splitting shriek.

Even as that horrible shriek echoed in my ears, I saw it! Or was I going crazy? Did I see it, or was I being hypnotized? True, I did feel strange. It might be the native beer and food, the heat of the fires, or was it that vile-smelling smoke emanating from the vaporous gourd? It may have been all of those things. How could I explain or ever know the cause of what I actually did see?

That green vapor had taken shape. The fetish man was now murmuring in soft persuasive tones as if encouraging someone or something. I saw myself as if portrayed on a movie screen, and through a dense, green smoke-cloud I saw hills, valleys, dense jungles and animals roll past. I saw in detail how a horde of savage fighters persistently followed in my wake. At the head of my line of safari boys there were two tall, powerful natives, strangers to me, yet friendly and leading as if they had a definite goal in view. Constantly they urged me on—always toward the north. The scene vanished, but in its place, standing out with vivid clearness, I saw an *impi* of an unknown tribe in full war regalia savagely attacking and slaughtering a much smaller party of natives, in the midst of whom were the two stalwart young warriors previously seen leading my safari north.

The outcome of such a one-sided battle was obvious. One by one the warriors of the two young chiefs went down, until a mere handful remained. At a signal the opposing force, as one man,

rushed with overwhelming numbers upon the survivors of the gallant defenders. But instead of spearing to death every remaining warrior, the two young chiefs, after a terrific struggle, were made captives and led off amidst the victor's *impi,* who continuously humiliated the victims on their march to death, or worse, by ugly guffaws of coarse laughter, at the same time prodding them with the points of their spears.

I struggled, but my feet were held as if in a vice of steel. I made a more strenuous effort then, with a tremendous burst, exerted all my strength to take a step toward that *impi.* That last supreme effort—what had it done? I stared in amazement. There was nothing—nothing where that savage, bloody *impi* had been marching. Nothing but the fetish man, who, still kneeling, was now packing up his absurd paraphernalia, and the old Chief, still placidly caressing his bulging paunch.

What had happened? Had I dreamed it all? No! It was too realistic. Besides—*I had not been asleep!*

Staring from one to the other, I asked my Kikuyu what he had seen. Green with terror, the boy could make no coherent sound. Dripping with perspiration, I slumped back to my tree stump, trying to direct my jumbled thoughts into a channel of saneness.

After a few minutes, during which old M'Abuta remained silent, I felt composed enough to question the wise old sage who, although outwardly showing no knowledge of what had happened, was anything but oblivious to his surroundings or the happenings of the past few minutes. The unexpected and startling question further substantiated my theory.

"Does the white visitor of M'Abuta's country still insist on hunting the okapi, or would he consider my friendship in helping him find those two long lost native chiefs, and perhaps eventually reaching his goal on this long journey? Or does he still persist in treating the mighty M'Abuta as an uninitiated, untried warrior?"

It was clear that M'Abuta knew as well as I why I was in his country. How he gained such knowledge, whether through the fetish man's devilish practices or by the aid of spies, will ever remain unknown to me, and will add one more mystery

to that unexplainable "something" which is the soul of Africa.

Long into the night, M'Abuta, the interpreter and I sat discussing details of my proposed journey. A spell had bound me, fatigue was non-existent, and before I eventually returned to my own camp I had committed myself to a most solemn vow either to bring back M'Abuta's two sons or to learn definitely their fate before returning to civilisation. M'Abuta had insisted on adding to the potential fighting strength of my safari by sending ten of his picked and tried warriors, whom a young chief named N'Oballá would command.

CHAPTER 7.

"WAKE up, Bwana, you am sleeping late. Here am your coffee; it's nearly sunup. Bwana 'member giving orders last night for the camp to be ready to trek at daybreak?"

"Yes, yes, Jacobus, that's all right."

The incidents of the night before flashed through my mind. Draining the last drop of coffee from the mug, I glanced sceptically toward the *donga*, the meeting place with M'Abuta, half convinced that it had all been a fantastic dream. Embers still smouldering were all that remained in that natural amphitheatre. Then, after all, it was *not* a dream! My gaze fell upon the hustling boys, and for further proof of the reality of my *indaba* with M'Abuta, amongst my own safari boys now helping in the preparation for departure, were ten young Masai warriors. Handsome, splendid types, perfectly proportioned, the smallest of them was over six feet, and as graceful as the leaping impali of their own broad lands.

Retrospectively I reviewed the *indaba* with M'Abuta, which had lasted into the early hours of the morning. The old chief had explained that the two young chiefs taken prisoner were none other than the sons of M'Abuta himself. They had been on a hunting expedition some distance within the Congo itself, accompanied by fifty warriors of their tribe. The party had been ambushed by a large force of bloodthirsty Obanzis. Every warrior of M'Abuta's *impi* had been killed; his two sons, the sole survivors of the massacre, M'Abuta later learned, had been taken captive.

Rumours were brought from time to time to M'Abuta that the two captives were sold into slavery to a Pygmy tribe occupying a wild country in the northern part of the Congo—a desolate, unknown region where none attempted to go. These Pygmies

were supposed to be connected in some way with runners travelling back and forth on secret errands to Arab traders.

During years of anxiety, old M'Abuta had sent many expeditions of his *impis* into the Congo in the hope of eventually rescuing or, at least, learning the fate of his sons.

The startling wizardry of the old fetish man, and M'Abuta's story, mingled in my memory with that bright star which had burned into my consciousness as I lay in the strange borderland between sleeping and waking, the night before I had set out on this journey.

As the time for Antoine's return was now near, my immediate concern was to get back to my base west of Bukoba with all speed. I need not, however, have hurried, as it was another two days after reaching my base before my observation boys came rushing into camp with the exciting news of Vosion's approach. Leaping on Magnolia's bare back I sped out to meet my old friend. I will skip over the details of the early moments of our meeting; our thoughts and feelings, as well may be imagined, were far too emotional for words. We stood jabbering away, unmindful of the broiling sun, until I felt a gentle tugging at my sleeve; it was Jacobus wishing to remind me of the feast Capera had prepared.

That night, over our fires, I explained to Antoine the reasons and purposes of my journeyings, relating the happenings in detail, including the incident of M'Golomba, the carrier of coloured stones; but, as I desired to learn his reactions up to that point, I refrained from any reference whatever to an association with Chief M'Abuta. Meditatively stroking his goatee, Antoine disconcertedly, then in slow deliberate words, began to discredit my saneness and finished up by bluntly telling me, in the most delicate terms, that my perspective had terribly deteriorated since our last meeting.

"Quite flattering, aren't you?" I briefly retorted.

He pooh-poohed my plan, no matter what arguments I advanced, stating it was plain suicide to venture beyond Lake Kivu. Seeing that my present explanations were useless, in the end I related the M'Abuta incident, at the termination of which I saw, with a great deal of satisfaction, that Antoine had slightly

relented; then, when I eventually tipped into his hand the coloured stones from M'Golomba's little hide pouch, he became definitely interested, for here indeed was actual proof of my statements.

Before turning into our separate sleeping bags that night, I had won him over; he had given his word that he would go with me wherever I chose to go, so, with the welcome sound of his cheery voice ringing in my ears with the old-time dash and enthusiasm I knew so well, I fell asleep.

The next few days we were busy reorganizing our safari, readjusting and pooling our stores. We would need all the boys of our united forces. Vosion's boys were Congo for the most part, mine East-Central Africa, the whole being evenly balanced. When those of one tribe complained, those of the other would jibe them into silence. At last we were ready. Our expedition had become known to the few widely scattered planters in this sparsely populated district and most of them came to wish us good luck and a safe return as we started out for the long trek.

Leading the now long-winding safari, Antoine and I stepped out with buoyant spirits, thrilled at embarking on an adventure which might lead us to discoveries unthought of. We each wore helmets with puggarees which flowed down at the back for protection from the fierce sun. Fastened to our shirts across the shoulders and reaching to the waist, we wore thick quilted pads much the shape of a child's flying kite; this was for protection from sunstroke. Stout corded riding pants, thick leather leggings and heavy boots comprised our clothing. We carried our revolvers and that ever-ready and most useful of jungle weapons, the machet. Jacobus and N'Oballa followed a few paces behind us carrying our rifles. The safari carriers, each laden with his full allotted weight of fifty pounds poised on his woolly head, loped along in single file, naked but for their loin cloths, through which they stuck their long, serviceable knives. All carried their huge spears in their hands. Capera, the giant Swahili, towering a head above the others, brought up the rear to prevent them lagging.

After a long, tedious march, we reached the rickety native-built suspension bridge, which spans the Ruchuru River. Here we camped for the night, planning to cross the following morning. This is the village of Maye-yo-moto, meaning "hot water." Here

warm springs empty themselves into the river, a natural commodity taken advantage of by the natives for washing clothes, if any, and for cooking their food. The warm water also has attraction for hippos, which love to disport themselves in it, stirring up the mud as they splash and flounder.

It had taken us five days of steady marching from Bukoba to reach this point at Ruchuru, the trek, apart from its ruggedness and fatigue, being uneventful. Within half an hour we were sitting about our own camp-fires, Antoine Vosion keeping me company in my earnest occupation of stripping roasted venison from its foundations with my teeth, a procedure which, if witnessed by some of my friends back home, would have placed me in the category of a cannibal.

After appeasing our wolf-like appetites, Antoine and I went down to the river, but on viewing the denseness of the dank grass, our judgment warned us away. That grass was high and thick enough to hide almost anything.

Many times during the night we heard the roar of lions from the opposite side of the river and occasionally, through a lane in the grass, we saw one passing down to the water to drink. Almost directly over our heads monkeys chattered, their chattering silenced at intervals by the vicious snarls of a leopard, but, although we kept a sharp lookout amongst the lower branches of the trees, where it is the leopard's habit to hide when awaiting an unwary victim, not once did we catch a glimpse of the marauder.

We were up before sunrise and whilst waiting for breakfast walked down to inspect the native bridge. Close scrutiny proved it to be a most crazily constructed affair; in fact it was nothing more or less than a succession of long slender saplings and branches woven together by miles of illianas, added to which was a mass of papyrus reed, the whole matted down to a state of semi-solidity. We tested it by walking part way over, and the way that flimsy structure trembled and swayed over the tepid yellow waters of the river filled us with trepidation.

Crossing the bridge with our safari was a bigger task than we had anticipated. Dangerous enough without a load, the porters found crossing it a risky business, as the slightest tip in any direction on the flimsy structure meant being precipitated

into the muddy stream with its hidden dangers. After a few experiments we found the easiest way was for two porters without loads to cross with another porter loaded and support him on either side. This made our progress slow but safe, and eventually the crossing was completed without mishap.

We were now actually within the border of the Congo. The Ruindi Plateau and Plains were our first objective; this we had learned was the most prolific lion district in Africa.

We marched in a northerly direction in order to avoid the possibility of meeting unfriendly natives. Toward four in the afternoon we began unloading and building thorn barricades around us. I wanted to be certain of completing a safe camp for the night before darkness fell. The boys were set to secure plenty of wood for our night fires as safety outside their range after dark would be decidedly uncertain. When building barricades we placed the roots of the thorn bush inward, thereby making a villainous barrier of long thorns protruding toward the outside.

The natives of these districts and further into the Congo build larger *bandos* than the East African. They house not only the whole family but all their live stock, which is driven pell-mell into the one large room to be protected from wild animals. Chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, cattle and natives all become sleeping partners when darkness falls on this part of Africa. The result is that nearly all of these villages have a pervading mixture of pungent odors. In some parts the natives are so lacking in knowledge and hygiene that they dig a shallow pit barely ten yards from the entrance of their *bandos* into which they cast the family refuse, added to which is swept all the droppings from their cattle, sheep and other live stock.

For four days we trekked over undulating plains and an occasional steep hill, at the end of which we arrived near the western side of the great Ruindi Plains, where we decided to make our camp and endeavour to bag one or two of the lions which had succeeded during the past week in keeping us from enjoying one whole night's uninterrupted sleep.

Here we gained an unbroken view of the great mysterious mountains or "Mountains of the Moon" which we hoped presently

to scale; we could see the escarpment winding like a great brown snake round and round and up and up until lost to view in the distance. It was up that trail we later intended to go.

Our first experience on the Ruindi was with buffaloes, and it was through these particularly dangerous animals that we lost three of our boys. The buffaloes, especially those of the Ruindi, are entirely different from the better known buffalo of America. They are a distinct species and are known as the Red Head or Nile Buffalo and are fierce and swift.

Several boys had been posted near camp in different directions. They were more or less hidden near a drinking pool by tall grass and were given orders to keep perfectly quiet, and as soon as game was sighted to dart away to us with the news. Each boy was armed with his huge stabbing spear. We hadn't long to wait before one of them came tearing into camp gesticulating excitedly and telling us that a small herd of buffaloes were coming towards the valley.

Hastening to our lookout, we sighted the herd making ground rapidly towards the watering pool, a great bull with pleated shoulders in the lead; on either side of him and a few paces to his rear were several younger bulls, followed by the cows and older animals. What a sight were these monarchs of their domain and how majestic their march! Every moment or so the leader lifted his head, looking round enquiringly, scenting for possible danger. Then the silence in our midst was suddenly broken by a sound like a miniature gun-shot. One of the boys had slipped, breaking a twig, and instantly the leader, with head thrown back, stopped. For a moment or two he stood scrutinizing the clump of bushes in which we were hidden; he trotted back and forth, snorting and stamping his feet; then, with lightning-like swiftness and a fierce snort, he charged towards our clump of bushes. One of our group let fly a shot, but missed a vital spot, which served only to infuriate the beast further. Like a flash he came on but was met with another ineffectual shot. Scrambling out of the bushes, we were faced by the now maddened animal. Rending the shrubbery to ribbons, tramping and stamping around, he spied one boy who, just a fraction of a second behind his fellows, was too late to escape. With a bellow of rage the bull charged full

tilt. Nothing short of a miracle could stop the impact. Antoine dropped to his knee and sent a bullet fair and square into the beast's forehead, but its impetus still carried it on with terrific force, one of his horns completely piercing the boy's thigh.

In the meantime, the herd, at the first crack of the rifle had, with great threshing of the underbrush, stampeded off in another direction. Springing forward, we pulled the victim free, immediately applied a tourniquet, then bathed the injured limb with a solution of permanganate of potash. Fortunately the thrust had missed an artery, but the boy lost an alarming amount of blood before the haemorrhage was stopped. His pain must have been terrific, yet he did not complain.

This was not an encouraging incident for our first hunt on the Ruindi. It meant either remaining here for probably a month, or sending the injured boy back for treatment—a long journey to the south of Victoria Nyanza. Eventually we decided on this latter course and, as two of our Somalis had been anything but content, we chose them for the escort. When this was announced there were signs of discontent among other members of the safari. Calling Jacobus and Capera into my *bando,* I inquired the reason for the disaffection. Some of the boys feared the cannibal tribes we would soon be approaching; others were not used to wild game hunting such as we contemplated and were growing impatient to return to their homes. Our latest accident serving as a pretext, others beside the Somalis now wanted to turn back. I surmised it was a ruse on the part of some of the boys to get higher wages; so instructing Capera to form the boys into a crescent for an *indaba,* I brought out our supply of snuff and gave each a liberal portion. I then thanked them as loyal boys for their past services and reminded them that on the occasion of our return from the hidden caves near the coast I had paid them in excess of their wages.

I asked if any had cause for complaint of unfair treatment and, if so, to step forward. None moved. I then told them that after a few weeks in the Ruindi we would move on towards dangerous country and I would raise their wages by five rupees a month; that should any of them become injured or lose their lives, they, or their people, were to be adequately recompensed;

finally, that those who stood loyally by the safari and returned to East Africa with their Bwana would each receive an extra bonus of fifty rupees. I asked that all those who were willing to stand by the safari swear to their loyalty by raising their right arm into the air. Up went every right arm. I now hoped to keep harmony and unity among them. With loud guttural "hoys" and other similar sounds of approval, the natives dispersed and very soon we heard their voices chanting the weird melodies which help to weave the mysterious spell with which Africa binds her children.

We were now in dense tangled undergrowth, the real home of the lion. A little farther to the north, so we were informed, elephants and leopards abounded. We had posted lookouts at all vantage points and when approaching game was spotted, these would race back into camp with the news. One late afternoon two of these lookouts came tearing into camp with the startling statement that across the stream a little distance off, and opposite a drinking pool, where the elephant grass grew thick and high, they had spotted a huge bull elephant coming down to drink. With him were several cows and a baby elephant. The boys had watched his great head bobbing and swaying contentedly, oblivious to danger, when suddenly from out of the thick grass three leopards had leapt upon the bull, and a terrible commotion had ensued.

Hastily snatching up our rifles, Antoine and I made a dash for the pool. Warily crossing the small stream we silently worked around the patch of tall grass which was being threshed about as if a tornado had struck it. Creeping as near as we dared, we saw one of the most remarkable encounters that man has probably ever had the opportunity of observing.

The great bull was swinging round and round, trampling and bellowing. Three big leopards were hanging on to different parts of his anatomy. One leopard had secured a hold on the elephant's off hind leg; this one the bull was endeavouring to kick and trample off with his other hind leg. The second leopard had a grip on one flabby flank, doing his best to tear and rend, whilst the third had evidently just lost a grip on the elephant's trunk, which was badly torn. The old bull, his fighting spirit now roused to madness, seized around the neck the leopard which he had just

shaken from his trunk and, with a mighty heave, swung it into the air, then, bringing it down to earth with a sickening thud knocked the life out of it in that one fearful crash. Quick as a flash the mighty pachyderm swung his body partly round, reached out with his damaged trunk, and fairly ripped the second leopard from his flank. However, he treated this one differently. Stamping with one foot on the leopard's body and twirling his trunk around its neck, the old bull literally tore his victim's head clean out of its body, then trampled on and mashed the carcase into the ground. The third leopard did not wait for what was coming to him but dashed off into the undergrowth.

For a few moments we stood gasping. It had all happened so swiftly—an unprecedented thing so far as our knowledge went. We had completely lost all idea of shooting that splendid specimen of a tusker and, as if it had been previously arranged between us, no one attempted to lift his rifle as the wonderful old warrior slowly turned and limped back to his cows. We had not the heart to slaughter that victorious beast which had put up such a great, one-sided fight. He deserved his freedom; and so we watched him move slowly off with the herd.

Two hours' trek brought us to a section of the plains reputed to be a lion's paradise. Here it was no longer a matter of being afraid of not getting our lion, but rather that we might get too many. After going into the thick shrubs and grass for some distance, Antoine and I decided it would be wiser to spread out into a crescent formation.

After an hour's march, we reached a little clearing where, from the manner in which the grass was beaten down, it was evident that there must be some kind of meeting place of big animals. Presently we discerned several well beaten tracks through tunnel-like paths probably leading to lairs or drinking pools and to the outer plains. We had to make a choice between the possibility of meeting Leo right at his home or out on a foray. Choosing a path to the left we scrambled along for some distance, most of the time having to bend almost double to escape the archway of jumbled vines and shrubbery.

I had been leading for part of the distance; then Antoine insisted on taking a turn at the head. He had been leading for

a few minutes when he suddenly stopped with hand uplifted for silence and beckoned me forward. A little way ahead we could see the tangle of undergrowth had been torn down and dragged away and in one corner of the small clearing lions had built their jungle home. Very comfortable it looked, too, a veritable bower of branches and grass with the bed of it built up about a foot. Evidently we had arrived at siesta time, as lusty snores boomed on the otherwise deep silence. For the moment, however, all we could see of them was the tip of one tail.

Here, indeed, was a problem. We didn't want to wait until darkness for them to awaken, yet it seemed too unsportsmanlike to rouse them from their peaceful slumberings. The problem was solved for us in an unexpected manner. So intent had we been upon this particular bower that we had failed to notice a second path near the entrance on which now appeared, silently but swiftly, a huge lion of the black-maned species who, immediately scenting us, gave vent to a roar which almost froze our blood.*

There was instant commotion in the sleeping chamber. Crack! went Antoine's rifle; but in his anxiety to stop that great beast he had taken too hasty a shot. The lion, with one mighty spring, spanned the little clearing between us. A double report snapped out. The discharge, catching him in mid-air, rendered him harmless as he crashed to earth, but we had not time to give him much of our attention, as the others, aroused, were now snarling and roaring preparatory to making a charge at us.

Jacobus and Capera were now at my side, while the other boys were forcing their way through the dense undergrowth in order to get in at the fight. The lions were still uncertain where to attack. Their hesitancy appeared to pique the lioness, who stalked among them and, as it seemed to us, snarled out her contempt of her men for tarrying. She seemed more ferocious than the males until suddenly—possibly to show off their bravery in front of her—they commenced to advance, giving vent to vicious roars.

* African jungle lions are seldom, if ever, seen in their native element with the huge, widely-spread manes one sees on Leo at circuses or zoos. The reason for this is that the lion more or less tears out his mane on the bushes he is always scraping through, and also when jogging along the low, tunnel-like paths through dense jungle such as described.

We fired together. Down came the two males, and an instant later Capera and some of the boys leaped in with their spears and machets. In less than a minute Mrs. Lion had slumped to the ground beside her two companions. Looking around at the boys to see if all was well, I noticed Capera trying to hide his left arm. Upon examination I found his forearm had been sliced open almost to the bone. He had got in the way of a wielded machet during the attack on the lioness. This was bad luck—our guide and most useful man injured! Binding up the wound, I immediately ordered a return to our little camp, where we gave Capera's arm further treatment. Several stitches had to be inserted but he did not flinch. Smiling bravely, he assured me it would be all right in less than a week; however, we sent him back to our permanent camp where he could rest and his wound would receive better attention.

Finally we decided on our last lion hunt before returning to our permanent camp. Before sunrise we were on our way. It was not long before some of our beaters were fortunate in stalking a lion and, with Jacobus in the lead, we followed it for miles. He could follow the spoor of an animal though the marks might be old enough to frustrate the keenest eyes of a white man. He had informed us that the lion was now very near, having passed along but a short time before. He now said that the lion was stalking a koodoo or perhaps a kongonia, a speedy animal possessing a pair of formidable horns with which, given an equal chance, it can disembowel any large animal.

Pushing along for fear of losing what promised to be a possible encounter, we presently saw at a short distance ahead something which held us spellbound. Two hundred paces ahead, the lion, tail towards us, crouching to the ground, whilst, all unaware, a big kongonia was grazing peacefully! Then, a very slight noise prompted the kongonia to turn in the lion's direction. He was too late, however, for in two or three gigantic leaps the lion had sprung on to the withers of his victim and was digging his claws in to get a firm grip. With a powerful forearm he reached around to the nozzle of the beast to drag the victim's head around towards him. With a sickening snap the helpless animal's neck was broken. Springing swiftly off, the lion gripped the jowls of

the animal in his own capacious jaws and with his body crouching to the ground he swung the body of his prey up and across his back. With the agility of a cat and the strength that only a full-grown African lion possesses, he ran, leapt into the bushes, and vanished.

We made no attempt to follow, but pressing on through the dense undergrowth our way presently became patchy and less tangled; here we hoped to get a wider range of view and possibly some more action. Sending the boys on their usual crescent-shaped formation we hoped to round up another lion and it was but a very short time before some of them came speeding back, yelling as they ran: "Elephants, Bwana, Elephants!"

Running forward we met all the boys returning in wild excitement. We could hear distinctly the crashing of undergrowth and feel the ground vibrating with the heavy stamping of elephants' feet moving along at high speed. They were certainly in a hurry as, before we had time to make any kind of a pre-arranged reception, they showed themselves a couple of hundred yards to our left flank and sheered off slightly in that direction. Whether they had scented us or had caught a warning sound, it was impossible to say, but Antoine and myself fired almost simultaneously and a moment later Jacobus' rifle rang out. There was instant commotion among the herd, two crashing down, while a third, having possibly received a slight wound, turned around trumpeting, bellowing and stamping until he caught sight of us. Then, lowering his trunk to an outstretched position as if feeling for us, he came shuffling forward and, although not seeming to travel rapidly, his movements must have been much quicker than we thought, for in the merest moment he was almost upon us, his great ears spread out like two umbrellas, his eyes blinking viciously.

Stopping his trumpeting he came on in deadly earnest. He really meant business. I could almost feel that formidable trunk around my neck. Crack! went Antoine's rifle, then my own. Both shots hit him. The great mass of flesh and bone slumped to the knees only a few paces before us. The remaining members of the herd had already stampeded. We had bagged three bulls, the largest being the one which had fallen to both our rifles. The

tusks of the smaller elephants measured forty-eight inches and fifty-one inches, while the tusks of the great bull measured sixty-nine inches and seventy-three inches, respectively.

We certainly had no cause for complaining on our last day's hunt on the Ruindi. With the few boys left, we had a big task in getting our precious spoils of ivory transported to our permanent camp. The delay would set us back two days at least. However, we were well satisfied when at last we did reach camp laden down with the treasure of our hunt.

CHAPTER 8.

LUOFO, the farthest outflung post of the Belgian Congo Administration, was of little, if any, use, being too far from any real force. It was abolished when the Government made a further movement north.

Leaving Luofo, our march, now due north, was beset with ever-increasing difficulties, each succeeding hill becoming steeper, longer and more broken. Consequently, before reaching Kayumba, a few miles south of Miserbere, we were worn, weary, hungry and stiff-limbed. We passed rapidly through the village of Kayumba without stopping, as we did not care for the natives' furtive and uncompromising looks, nor their unintelligible, uncordial grunts given in reply to Capera's questioning.

Having to camp for the night near this village, we made specially strong barricades of thorn bush and kept our fires well banked up throughout the night. There was no alarm, however, the night passing off without incident.

Next morning we were up unusually early for the purpose of hunting, as our store of meat was practically depleted, and before long we had bagged two fat gazelles which, after being roasted, we were later peacefully munching, when we were surprised by the sudden appearance of a strange native who walked silently into our midst and stood like a bronze statue before us.

What a superb specimen of manhood he was! He carried, slung over his shoulder, a bow fully six feet long and of such weight as would require great strength to handle. A quiver of arrows hung at his back, some longer than others and of a different colour. I wondered whether he had come with friendly overtures or had just stumbled across our camp by chance and, out of curiosity sought to learn what kind of people these white-faced strangers were. My momentary cogitation was rudely interrupted by one of our boys hurling a handful of pap (crushed

rice mixed with cold water and eaten with dates) right into the face of the stranger. Quick as a flash our visitor slipped the bow from his shoulder, into which an arrow was fitted with marvellous swiftness. Leaping forward, I brought the butt of my sjambok down on his wrist, then made a dash for the boy who had thrown the pap and belaboured him lustily. Some of the other boys started muttering and fingering their knives. At this Antoine joined in and right merrily the two of us basted any boy showing the slightest desire to mutiny. Our visitor seemed to enjoy the chastisement. He showed his approval by giving vent to grunts of satisfaction. It was quite evident that my timely intervention had made him our friend.

Calling Capera, I asked him to question the visitor, but after a few attempts he gave it up. I then beckoned to one of the Kikuyus and instructed him to interpret if possible. In a few moments the two were getting along fairly well, albeit a little jerkily. I asked the Kikuyu to inquire from what tribe the native had come and soon learned our guest was no less a personage than Chief N'Buymango from the Buhunis and a nephew of Chief M'Alinga, paramount chief of the tribe at Miserbere. The boy who had thrown the pap had indirectly and unconsciously done our safari a very good turn, as it was imperative for our safety to be on friendly terms with these nearby cannibals.

The Chief wished to know why our boy had flung the food at him, at the same time casting a vengeful glance in the culprit's direction. In order to pacify him and also to secure his friendship toward the boys, as well as ourselves, I explained that the boy had merely mistaken him for an enemy of his Bwana instead of the friend whom we knew him to be. I assured him that the boy was extremely sorry for having dared offer the slightest insult to his Bwana's honoured guest. This explanation apparently appeased the bronze Apollo for, with a glimmer of a smile, he remarked that I had good boys to guard me so well. Calling the offending boy, I ordered him to make his apologies to the great Chief N'Buymango. This done, I requested our guest to be seated and join us in our interrupted meal. By the time it was finished we were all on the friendliest terms. Personally,

I thought if all cannibals were like this one they had been greatly maligned.

On learning that the young chief was returning to his home, I inquired if he would lead our party to his illustrious uncle as we desired the opportunity of paying him homage and presenting gifts which we had brought from across the seas. His eyes sparkled with joy at this prospect; whereupon I asked Jacobus to unpack a certain bundle from which I selected a brightly coloured silk handkerchief and presented it to N'Buymango with the remark that, after I had paid my respects to his uncle, I would present him with something for his *umfazi*. We then set out for the cannibal stronghold lying deep in the mountains west of Lake Edward.

On nearing the native village, we could see it was perched on the protected side of a hill. We sensed that our arrival had already been made known. This thought was quickly confirmed by the realistic sight of spear-armed warriors coming to meet us and then turning to speed back to their village. As they ran ahead I searched the face of our young chief trying to read his thoughts, but his physiognomy was inscrutable, immobile as a stone image. I began to wonder if his friendship was merely assumed for some sinister motive. I asked if the speeding warriors were members of his tribe and, if so, why he did not hail one of them to send a message ahead to his uncle. To these inquiries he replied that Chief M'Alinga already had the news and was preparing a reception. His reply was something to think over. I wondered what kind of a reception it was to be. Would it be best to camp where we were? We would be less liable to attack if their intention was hostile.

Halting the safari and drawing Antoine aside, I discussed with him the situation, the result of our *indaba* being that we decided to move a little over to the west on elevated ground free from the tangle of undergrowth. To N'Buymango, through the Kikuyu, we explained that in order to prepare for our visit to his illustrious uncle we must camp here as we had much to do before receiving the great Chief with the honour due to him. This was plainly disappointing to the young chief. He made

no attempt to hide his chagrin, but endeavoured through our interpreter to persuade us to proceed.

We were not to be cajoled, however. We had decided to remain, and remain we did, N'Buymango silently marching off toward his village; but as we watched we noticed that before he had gone a bare quarter of a mile he was joined from nowhere, as it seemed to us, by a party of probably twenty warriors, none of them less than six feet in height and all armed with spears. For a moment or two a conference was held, then the warriors opened out to permit their young chief to pass, falling in behind, and in this formation the group was very soon lost to view as they climbed the winding trail amidst the wild rugged hills.

The young chief's abrupt departure did not help to allay our suspicions and, therefore, we decided to prepare for any eventualities by first securing quantities of wood and filling every available water container, after which we built a mighty stockade of young saplings and thorn bushes. Whilst Antoine and I sat discussing the situation, Capera approached with the Kikuyu who had acted as our interpreter.

"What is it, M'Ambimba?"

"Bwana," answered the boy, "my father speak some like Buhuni Chief so I know much what he say."

M'Ambimba informed us that this tribe of cannibals might possibly have sprung from a remnant of his own tribe which, for some unknown reason, had migrated West many years before from the low-lands. This conjecture seemed to be borne out by the fact that M'Ambimba was the only one in the several tribes represented in our safari who was able to understand N'Buymango. Whilst on the march, M'Ambimba, in his conversation with the young cannibal chief, had learned that their tribe still practised cannibalism and, although they did not usually kill, for the purpose of eating, those with whom they were on friendly terms, they undoubtedly did resort to devouring their dead relatives and that with great ceremony.

These Buhunis considered it wastefulness to neglect what the gods provided for them in the way of an enemy, dead or alive, such enemies providing most of the human flesh they consumed. They bury a relative but later exhume the body for

the double purpose of appeasing their insatiable appetites for human flesh and absorbing all the good qualities and virtues of the departed one. Their belief is that they are paying their illustrious departed relatives an honour.

As no one from the cannibal village put in an appearance, Antoine and I decided that, by presenting the Chief with plenty of fresh meat, it might have the effect of neutralizing any feeling other than friendly which he might entertain towards us. We therefore decided on a little hunting expedition here where the elephant was at home and seldom molested. Herds roamed these parts in their course from the lowlands over the mountain ridges toward tributaries of the great River Congo.

Leaving Jacobus in charge, with strict injunctions to permit no one to enter our *bomba,* Antoine and I set out with Capera and half-a-dozen boys. We had barely gone ten yards outside the *bomba* when, to our amazement, we saw on either side at a short distance, about fifty big Buhuni warriors. Calling our Kikuyu, I told him to bring one of the warriors, explaining that I wished to converse with him. Two of the cannibals returned with the boy and stood before us like a pair of carved ebony statues—impenetrable, mask-like. Through M'Ambimba I inquired why they were following us, to which they replied that they were obeying their Chief as we were his guests. They were to see that no harm befell us as long as we were within the boundaries of the Buhuni's territory.

Was it real concern for our safety or was there some sinister motive back of this carefully planned protection? I told them that our respect for their Chief was of such greatness that we wished to provide his royal larder with plenty of game whilst we were here and, with this end in view, we were even now setting out to secure elephant meat enough to make a great feast for the whole village. I requested that one of them return to their Chief with this information. Our plans apparently put them in such a ferment of excitement that they both dashed off in the direction of their settlement shouting the news back to their comrades as they ran. We thereupon invited the remaining warriors to join our hunt, a suggestion to which they acquiesced readily enough. From their questions we understood they had

never before seen firearms and it was not until they had actually witnessed us using a rifle in bringing down an elephant that they could understand its use. It wasn't long then before they all wanted the pipes that spit fire and death—a request we firmly refused.

Half an hour's hard walking brought us to lower ground where the elephant grass grew fully ten feet high and where unless one is posted on a hillock or higher ground, there is danger of a sudden, unexpected encounter with elephant or leopard. If there is no available spot for a lookout, the safest procedure is to push a few paces through the dense screen, then listen well before proceeding further. We, therefore, sought a high vantage outlook and it wasn't long before we heard the sibilant cry from one of the boys, "Elephant, Bwana!" A herd of them was now plainly seen grazing in the valley below.

Spreading out along the edge of the tiny plateau on which we had perched ourselves, we could see, stretching miles away to the west, a beautiful valley intersected by many small streams whilst here and there were gently sloping well grassed and wooded hills. Far across, on the western boundary, was the last great ridge of the unknown mountains which divided the country between Lake Edward and the lowlands of the River Congo. Somewhere amongst those unknown mountains we expected to find the powerful and troublesome Chief Kitawiti, providing our friends, the cannibals, did not make too strenuous an objection to our departure.

Crouched in silence on our little ledge overhanging the valley, we spied below us, seemingly at our very feet, grazing peacefully, a herd of elephants amongst which we could easily pick out several big tuskers. A little distance away we counted fifteen cows and two babies. I called softly to M'Ambimba to ask the cannibal near him if he could reach one of those bulls with his arrow. The cannibal thought he was too far away to do any harm but indicated he could easily climb down a little way towards them without alarming the elephants. As I wanted to know just what effect an arrow fired from a bow would have on one of those huge animals, I asked him to try to hit the largest bull.

The warrior disappeared and in a surprisingly short time we

heard the twang of his bow just below us. Almost instantly the largest of the bulls jerked up his great head, shook his cumbersome body, and turned with a vicious trumpeting and uplifted trunk toward another tusked bull almost as large as himself. Shuffling, with trunk outstretched, the injured elephant lowered his massive head to make ready for a charge, doubtlessly thinking his companion responsible for his sharp pain, whilst possibly the second bull, in his animal sagacity, surmised his brother had a touch of indigestion. Whatever they thought did not serve to prevent both from entering into a deadly combat. We saw the crash of head and tusk as the two giants came together with a force seemingly great enough to smash a concrete wall. Then they drew apart, each manoeuvring for a thrust with his tusk, the younger bull a bit lighter and more active, suddenly slithering to one side and, with a quickness not to be imagined in such a huge, ungainly creature, wheeled half round as the other charged him and with terrific force sent his left tusk tearing into the heavier bull's shoulder.

With a terrible screech the bigger tusker went down on his knees, pulling the other's head down with him. It was obvious that the younger bull's tusk had pierced a shoulder blade and become jammed. The victor stood with his four feet bunched together struggling to free himself. The old fellow, not finished yet, trumpeting madly, lurched to his feet and, with a gigantic effort, tore himself free. Still trumpeting and with ears flapping wildly, he made another supreme effort to overcome his antagonist. Holding his head fairly high, he made a terrific lunge straight into the other's face. The quickness of this unexpected move disconcerted the younger bull. The impact was awful. One of the great bull's tusks penetrated near the eye of his opponent as easily as if it were being pushed into a block of cheese, going in at least two and a half feet. With an agonized screech the smaller bull sank to his knees, whilst the big one withdrew his tusk only to prod his now vanquished companion again and again until at last he was dead.

The cows and babies meanwhile had remained huddled a short distance off, watching the outcome of this unexpected battle. The victor now turned to the herd. Slowly and painfully he

dragged himself toward them, then stood with his head very close to the others as if relating the incident, after which he wheeled and slowly limped off toward the west, the others following.

It seemed only fair and sportsmanlike to let that grand, victorious old tusker go free and, under normal conditions, I would have forbidden his downfall; but we ourselves were in such a precarious position that sentiment and the remembrance of finer things had to be thrust into the background. Supplying the old cannibal chief with meat, and plenty of it, might mean the preservation of our very lives within the next few hours and, therefore, our guns barked almost simultaneously. We had the satisfaction, mingled with remorse, of seeing the tusker slump and, a moment later, down went a couple of the cows. Then, at a signal, the horde of cannibal warriors rushed pell-mell to their mad debauch.

The whole countryside seemed to spring into life. Not only were the warriors who had accompanied us racing toward the carcases, but the inhabitants of the entire village were thronging to the spot as fast as their legs could carry them. Not far from where we were now standing appeared the young Chief N'Buymango and at his side a stately grey-haired old man with kindly eyes. Approaching us, the young chief, in grandiose and eloquent terms, told us he had the honour of presenting his illustrious uncle who had come to do homage to his guests and ascertain by what method we would destroy those giant marauders. He had witnessed our magic and was greatly interested. We had supplied the whole village with sufficient meat for a week. Would we now visit their village and accept the hospitality of the Buhunis?

Moving down the valley we watched the wild scramble. Some fifty warriors took their stations around one of the dead beasts, protecting the interest of their Chief in that particular carcase. No native dared even approach the animal reserved for him. The crowd surged about the other carcases, themselves akin to maddened animals, each making frantic efforts to secure the choicest portions. Struggling, hacking, rending, they all but buried themselves inside those mountainous masses of bloody flesh. As I watched them cramming portions into their mouths,

with dripping hands, or hurling huge chunks toward their women who scrambled frantically on the outskirts of that seething horde, they lost all semblance of human beings. We thanked our lucky stars that their lust for blood had been satisfied by elephant flesh instead of human—perhaps our own!

Whilst this hideous scramble proceeded, I requested the Chief to have room made to enable our boys to hack off the tusks and I am sure he genuinely tried to do so, but to no avail. Nothing short of annihilation would sever the horde from their frenzied greed. I asked the Chief if they were always so eager to get the reward of the hunt, and he assured me that it would be useless to interfere with them until the last remnants of the flesh had been stripped from the bone, as they had been without flesh longer than usual. It was not until nothing but the skeletons and tusks remained that we attempted to secure our reward.

We returned to our camp accompanied by the cannibals, Chief M'Alinga, his nephew N'Buymango, and a retinue of fetish medicine-men and councillors, the rear being brought up by about a hundred warriors and the disorderly rabble of villagers, many of the women carrying children on their hips and also as much as they could of elephant meat stuck on spikes of wood. The children carried chunks of the flesh but the men—well, they brought themselves and their knives! A wonderful place for men, this, for here the women work and do not question, evidently enjoying the carrying out of their lordly masters' wishes, which seems sufficient honour for the wives in the African jungle. Woe to the one who rebels!

Having authentic information of how, some time earlier, a little distance to the north, a young Belgian officer had been attacked and, with his whole party, annihilated and eaten by this very tribe of cannibals, we naturally were most cautious before agreeing to be entertained in their village. With this in our minds, we decided to entertain the Chief at our own camp for this day at least, hoping thus to get better acquainted with him and win his good-will with gifts. We also considered it much wiser to visit their village early in the day as we had no desire to be there after sunset.

During the festivities that afternoon in honour of the old Chief and his councillors we could find no cause for alarm. He was a very kindly old fellow and was most graciously thankful for the gifts which we showered upon him. I soon began to take quite a liking to the old Buhuni Chief. However, I noticed that the more friendly he became toward us, the more malignant were the glances we received from his fetish or medicine men. These creatures were hideously bedecked with anything from a dried monkey head to a human skull, such apparently being considered ornamental. One of them had the skeleton of a huge snake around his waist, with the head sticking out straight in front, the jaws being kept wide open and showing the fangs as if the reptile were about to snap.

We agreed to visit the native village on the following day and left the *bomba* in charge of the boy next in command to Capera—a Masai by the name of Seminaba—and half a dozen other boys. Then we set out for the cannibal village. Our arms had been carefully overhauled and all the spare rifles and revolvers served out to members of the safari, in addition to their spears. We had also loaded the boys down with gifts consisting of baubles of glittering glass, coloured handkerchiefs, necklaces, shawls, and one or two bright kimonos of cheap, brightly-coloured materials and, to make sure we were going to eat viands to which we were accustomed, we loaded a couple of boys up with two antelopes.

On the outskirts of the village we were met by a small army of warriors around whom we manoeuvred, so as to have them in front of us when entering their settlement. They led us to a *bando* conspicuous by its size and standing somewhat apart from the others. Outside this *bando* there were congregated what seemed to be the fetish and medicine-men of all the scattered tribes of cannibals reaching from there to the Semliki. Seated on a raised dais made from roughly-hewn logs was the great Chief, clothed in leopard skins, whilst on either side were his nephew and his chief councillor, the latter a very aged and kindly looking fellow.

As we drew near the old Chief stood erect, as did also his followers, and in a solemn voice welcomed us—the first white

brothers from afar to enter his village; we had come as friends and showered gifts upon him; had supplied his whole village with good food; had asked nothing in return and shown nothing but friendliness toward them. This he could not understand. Would we explain the real motive of our visit? Thereupon, through our interpreter, I made him understand that we represented the great brotherhood of man which had for its slogan friendship and brotherly love for all peoples. The old cannibal then regaled us for upwards of half an hour, during which time we stood sweltering in the terrific heat. At last he sat down and beckoned us to advance. Taking Antoine and me by the hand he led us toward the great *bando* which was his council chamber.

Before entering, I requested our host to allow me to present my cook to his chefs that he might show them how to prepare and season the foods we had brought. He was highly pleased at this thoughtfulness, and at once gave orders to one of his warriors. In a few moments the wives and their helpers made their appearance. Our cook boy had already been given instructions how to conduct himself during the preparation of the food and had received our orders that on no account was he to let our food out of his sight. To ensure this, we had given him two assistants who also knew that watchfulness was the order of the day.

We were ushered inside the *bando*. Looking around the walls and ceiling of this house of grass and sticks, I wondered from the trophies hanging there how long it had been since the last orgy had taken place, for of all the chambers of horror this one was the prize winner. When I had succeeded somewhat in sinking my aversion to the objects adorning the place, I could see a certain endeavour for orderliness in the festooning. Hanging from the walls toward the centre of the ceiling—row on row—the largest always in the centre and tapering away to the smallest at either end, were human skulls. At the far end of the room and stuck on the end of a long wooden spike which reached out from the wall for about two feet, were three highly polished skulls, the eye sockets of which appeared to be filled with wonderful emeralds, but which on later examination proved to be nothing more than well polished chrysoprase. When questioned as to where they

found these stones the warriors answered in a vague manner that the Pygmies from the northern border of the Congo had brought them after a raid on some desert sheik of the southern Sudan years before, trading them for food and commodities with the tribe of Wanandis and they, in turn, had traded for them with the old Chief M'Alinga.

Antoine and I were placed on either side of our host, then came his councillors and medicine men ranging down each side of the *bando* until the lowest in rank, such as warriors, lined the doorway. Around the walls of the room were roughly-hewn blocks of wood for seats; a higher seating arrangement for the old Chief, as well as for Antoine and myself, was at the farther end of the room. Each one took his place in front of his seat. Then their leader spoke a few words in a tongue which not even my interpreter could understand. As he recited what was apparently some religious ritual, all turned their faces toward the three skulls just above their Chief's head and, with hands outstretched, palms down, chanted in repetition after the old man. I learned afterwards that it was a prayer of reverence for their Great Chief N'Esangraba, the founder of their ancient tribe, who had passed to the land of shadows many hundreds of years before. I was informed that this chief was, in fact, a king of kings amongst the tribes then bordering on what is now known as the Sudan on the north, Uganda on the east, and Tanganyika to the south-east; whilst all the territory from Ruwenzori to the River Congo was also under the supreme rule of the illustrious N'Esangraba. The centre skull with the glittering green eyes was supposed to be that of this great potentate, whilst the two on either side were those of his favourite wives and, as I had no means of disproving this statement, I courteously believed it.

The old Chief now gave a long discourse on the greatness of his tribe, regretting their isolation from the outside world since we, their guests, had that day shown them other and better means of vanquishing an enemy and without taking the personal risk which they themselves now took with the spear. He had also seen how easy it was to bring in the great food provider, the elephant, with our fire-blowing pipes; we had taught him that his tribe had been wrong in waging war on all comers, for we had

come in peace wanting nothing in return but their good-will. We had not asked for their land, their daughters, nor their wives, but had brought them food and presents. Therefore, he had decided to guard us safely and mete out to us kindness so long as we remained in his territory but, in order that in future they should not be at the mercy of other tribes who might have fire-blowing tubes, he would request us before leaving his territory to give to his warriors half of our arms for whatever payment we might ask.

His gentle request left us nonplussed, but before we had time to give it much thought the wives and helpers and our cookboy came filing through the entrance with steaming gourd cauldrons of food, gourds of water and native-made beer. Our cook boy worked his way around to my side and, under the pretext of arranging the big leaf placed on a piece of bark which, by the way, was their substitute for a plate, whispered to me: "The food he all right, Bwana."

The feast was a lengthy affair. Every few minutes the old Chief would ask one or another of his councillors, or medicine and fetish men, some question on their particular problem. In approval of the food—different in every way from their accustomed diet—there was a succession of guttural grunts. It was a feast such as these cannibals had never before tasted, particularly if the repeated and quite audible indrawing of juicy morsels was an indication of their enjoyment. The last remnants were eventually devoured and, after everyone had wiped his greasy hands vigorously up and down his thighs, Chief M'Alinga gave the signal for all to file outside. Here had been arranged a half circular arena at one side of which were seated several young men with drums, whilst on the other side were a number of men wearing hideous masks and remarkably grotesque head-dress.

Once seated, the drums were beaten and two old men started making weird noises through curiously-shaped horns. The din was terrific, yet there seemed to be a certain unison and harmony between horns and drums. Into the arena sprang the masked men who, I was informed, were devil dancers. They were to dance the Death Dance. It certainly was the most uncanny of all the dances I ever witnessed, its termination being unlike

the usual native frenzied leaping and shouting in that there was a gradual slowing down of all movement with the "music" following suit. In the end it seemed as if the dancers were actually dying on their feet. The climax was reached when they simultaneously gave vent to unearthly wailing, then fell with a thud flat on the ground, lying there as if suddenly smitten until, at a signal from their Chief, a drum was tapped and the dancers sprang up and darted away. Their places were immediately taken by twenty nude girls who, I was told, were going to dance the Dance of Victory. Drums and horns worked up a lively noise. These girls, in utter abandonment, went through every muscular and sensual contortion of which the human body is capable. Their dance was long, frenzied and sinuous and, instead of falling down at the grand finale in make-believe fatigue or death, they fell from sheer exhaustion.

We were glad when it was over and, as the day was then well advanced, proposed leaving for our camp at once. The smilingly alert old Chief, however, had not forgotten his request for part of our firearms and reminded me of his request saying that I could ask anything in return. Pretending to confer with Antoine, I exclaimed: "This is a fine mess! In the first place, even if they intended only good-will toward us, there is a severe penalty for furnishing any natives with firearms."

Turning to Chief M'Alinga, I remarked that my friend and I could not come to satisfactory arrangements about recompense until we had discussed the matter fully and that we would do this the next day. At this he showed decided signs of displeasure and when a fetish man started to advise against the delay I began to see trouble. I quickly interjected the remark that our host had forgotten that whoever received guns must have instruction. To this he agreed and, after a further discussion of how long it would take for us to teach his warriors the use of the fire-pipes, we took our departure and with his farewell ringing in our ears we trudged back to camp.

Deciding that evasion was safer than argument, we had ordered Capera and Jacobus to have everything ready for breaking camp several hours before sunrise. By this ruse we hoped to be a safe distance from the spot before some curious Buhuni dis-

covered our departure. By the time the sun was above the horizon we had placed several miles between us and the Buhunis and were travelling in the direction of Kitawiti's territory. Before going many miles, we had to change our direction somewhat from north-west, owing to the tremendous difficulties which the broken country now presented. This meant a considerably longer journey than we had expected. At times we were scaling almost perpendicular cliffs, then a little later sliding down into quagmires, crossing small streams and patches of jungle-like country.

A little before noon on the second day after leaving our cannibal friends the boys in the rear of our safari suddenly reported that we were being followed. Leaving Antoine in the advance, I mounted a high point and through my glasses discerned a party of natives in full war dress, as yet a great distance away, but bearing down on either side of our safari. It took but a few moments to convince me they were Buhunis. Their haste was unmistakable—they appeared to be trying to get to some strategic points. Calling Capera to guard the rear and advise us of whatever took place, I ran to the advance and informed Antoine of what I had seen. Then, ascending a vantage point in the advance, we scrutinized the country ahead and instantly understood the hurry of the pursuing Buhunis. There, two or three miles ahead, we saw what looked like an impassable barrier in the shape of almost perpendicular mountains but which, from our observation point, appeared as if they had been cleft with some gigantic knife. We could faintly make out a narrow defile, deep, dark and rugged; the walls on either side rose to a considerable height, making a rough ledge on one side which extended inward as far as we could see. It was only through the use of our field glasses that we could make out the details of this unexpected barrier. There could be no mistaking the cannibals' intention of reaching that defile in advance of us, probably expecting to ambush and annihilate us by rolling rocks down from the ledge or transfixing us with their arrows and spears.

As we were averse to injuring these savages, much less taking life, we resorted to strategy. Rejoining the safari, we called Capera and Jacobus, instructing them to take the lead as if nothing were wrong, thereby leaving Antoine and myself free to

guard the advance from molestation or delay. The Buhunis were now well out on either side of us, at times entirely hidden from view, later, through our glasses, to be seen again eagerly climbing the steep hills, impelled onward by their sinister plan to entrap us. We could detect their quivers slung down their backs and their great bows over one shoulder, each one also carrying his stabbing spear. Whilst watching them, memory returned of the promise made by that amiable old Chief to guard us here in his territory. Recalling this kindly fact, I concluded that this could not be "his territory" and, therefore, he had considered his obligation ended.

We were now within long distance rifle range of the entrance to the defile; the cannibals had advanced to within almost a stone's throw of it. Selecting a spot where we could overlook the entrance to the pass, Antoine and I took up our positions and as soon as the nearest cannibal made an attempt to enter we both let fly at the ground near his feet. The report, then the smashing of rocks at their very feet, caused consternation amongst the savages. While they hesitated we again let fly. With a terrific bound the foremost native leapt over the ground toward the entrance. A third time we fired, so close in front of him that possibly a few stray splinters of rock sprayed him, but even this did not deter him. We could do no more to stop him without danger of killing him. We therefore concentrated on preventing the others from following by putting up a heavy barrage in front of each native as he attempted to move forward, sending out shots nearer and nearer so that in order to save themselves from injury they were compelled to retire. Once they started retiring we kept them on the run until they had gone back to a safe distance; there we kept them. Our safari now recommenced its forward move and when within a hundred yards or so of that narrow entrance we could see the isolated warrior seeking some means of escape. He was trapped and had probably given himself up for lost. Antoine insisted on going forward for an *indaba* with him.

I warned Antoine of the danger and suggested driving the cannibal ahead of us until he emerged at the other end of the defile, but on this point, for some inexplicable reason, Antoine was obdurate and determined on going ahead to have converse

with the Buhuni. Only by force could I have prevented my friend in his present contrary mood. Leaving his rifle with Capera and with a smile on his lips and twinkle in his honest brown eyes, he stepped gaily towards the narrow gorge. When within fifty paces of the entrance he commenced waving his handkerchief to the savage, who, apparently not understanding his meaning, came forward on the ledge and, before anyone could even anticipate his intentions, he had sent an arrow which felled Antoine. Instantly my rifle spat out a reply which sent that cannibal toppling, falling almost at the feet of my friend.

Sending Capera and the other boys to hold the entrance should the other warriors attempt to come nearer, I rushed to Antoine. He was in great pain, the barb having completely penetrated the fleshy part of the thigh. Quickly I applied a tourniquet and with my pocket knife sawed through the arrow where it emerged from the leg, then with a quick jerk pulled the remaining shaft clear through the wound. Ordering a fire quickly built, I soon had some boiling water with which I made a strong antiseptic solution. After making Antoine as comfortable as possible, I turned to the native and discovered my bullet had found his head but, on closer examination, saw it was only a glancing wound which had undoubtedly caused him to lose his balance and fall. The bullet had furrowed its way half around one side of his skull, making a slight groove the whole of its course. As I sat watching the cannibal, he opened his eyes and tried to sit up but fell over with a moan and, by the manner in which his left arm crumpled, I saw at once that it was broken.

Leaving him to regain consciousness, I got Jacobus to cut a couple of rough splints and quickly set the broken bone, then dashed some cold water over the injured head. Soon the native was sitting up. Questioning him through our interpreter, I asked why he had fired his arrow at my friend. He replied that he thought the white Bwana was putting evil magic on him when he waved the white leaf. I wanted to know why they were preparing to ambush us and he explained that we were now in Kitawiti's territory and although this chief was a long way off, he ruled over all this land. Our friend, Chief M'Alinga, had given instructions to his warriors that we were not to be attacked until

we had passed the boundary of his territory and reached this gorge.

Chief M'Alinga had had a conference with his fetish and medicine men the day we had gone and, as we had evaded his request for firearms, he had been counselled that we could not be his friends. Orders had been given to his warriors to take all our arms and in return give us spears, bows and arrows, and not to kill if it could be avoided as Chief M'Alinga had had sincere friendship for us. If we showed fight, we were to be vanquished and returned to the Chief dead or alive!

I bade the warrior go back to his Chief and tell him that, had we chosen, we could have wiped out every member of his little band, and that when we again returned to his territory we would demand and take full recompense for the wrong he had caused us and the great suffering inflicted upon my friend; then, with added admonition to make a rapid journey home, for fear our fire might catch him, I sent the wounded warrior off to join his companions.

Some of our boys were now set the task of making a litter for Antoine, it being too dangerous for us to remain where we were for any length of time, as there was the possibility that the already incensed fetish and medicine men of old M'Alinga might prevail upon him to send a larger force after us. Therefore, as soon as the litter was made, we set off through the gorge which, as we progressed, proved to be a veritable furnace. The ground was broken up by huge and jagged boulders which had fallen through the ages from the peaks of those lofty mountains rising high on either side of us. To make travelling worse, the gorge faced directly east and west and we had the full force of the pitiless Central African sun all day. There was no shade, not even the usual scrubby tufts of withered bush—nothing could possibly grow in such a furnace. The boys now began to complain of the rocks being too hot and jagged for their bare feet. As an incentive to press on, I explained to them the impossibility of returning without meeting the Buhuni warriors and the alternative of certain reward of better conditions, plenty of water and food once we gained the other end of that hellish gorge.

It took us one and a half days filled with every imaginable

physical suffering to reach the fertile plains on the other side of the range. By this time poor Antoine was in a high fever; his wound had become terribly inflamed, causing him great agony. I did what I could in the way of doctoring him with quinine and keeping his wound bathed, but I began to feel the futility of keeping up the march longer as he was becoming more and more irrational. By the time we had reached the lower country and water I had begun to fear for his recovery. It was too far from the nearest Post to get him there in his present condition. Turning northward we followed a small stream which ran almost parallel with the western face of the mountain range; journeying in this direction for three days, our progress being necessarily very slow. By this time Antoine was unconscious—in fact, he was almost in the last extremities.

The little stream we were following grew narrower daily. I noticed that, a short distance ahead of us, the mountains made a turn towards the west and gradually diminished in height, in fact, they seemed to fade away to nothingness in the distance. This fact brought the realization that we must be nearing the home of the powerful Kitawiti. As we slowly and painfully trudged along, I kept wondering how we would be received by this much feared chief who, according to rumour, made his village almost an impregnable fortress. It was known that he had a splendidly organized native army of approximately twenty thousand fierce warriors and, with the unique position of his stronghold, was able to post outlooks at all strategic points, thereby making it an utter impossibility for strangers to approach undetected and, should Kitawiti not want them, they never did reach his village. Naturally, he was not only greatly feared but also fiercely hated by other tribes bordering his domain. Whenever a small party of Wanandis ventured very far from their villages there was always the possibility of ambush by warriors of other tribes who had suffered injustices and cruelties at the hands of the paramount chief Kitawiti.

Having completed arrangements for camp this night and first seeing that everything possible was done for Antoine, I decided to take Jacobus and a few boys with me on a little hunt as our meat supply was now very low. Crossing the stream, we made

for the densely wooded country where we hoped to come up with an antelope, impali or, perhaps, that all but mythical animal, the okapi. We must have travelled upwards of three miles from our camp and were now proceeding very cautiously when we noted with surprise the gradual barren appearance of the ground before us. We began climbing higher ground and then emerged at the foot of a low range of hills covered with gigantic boulders, the whole being devoid of foliage. On nearing a cluster of these huge boulders, we were suddenly startled at hearing hoarse cries and clashing of metal against metal, then an occasional agonized scream.

Going forward with greater caution, I discovered that the noise was coming from the other side of those huge boulders. Cautioning the others to get down on their bellies, we all started crawling to the summit of the rocks, which, as soon as it was reached, gave us a most unexpected view of a battle royal between two warring native factions. One side was much weaker in numbers than the other and was already waging a losing fight, three of their number being placed hors-de-combat. Their leader was in the centre of the front where the fight was fiercest—a young giant whose dexterous wielding of his huge spear spoke volumes.

It was an unequal fight. I hated to see the inevitable downfall of that heroic young warrior so, whispering to Jacobus to fire at the spears of the opposite side and be careful not to hit anyone, we both commenced our unique method of succouring the big bronze Apollo. Zip! Zip! Ping! sounded the shots as they went slithering along the blades of spears. Zip! Zing! Ping! went our bullets against the steel of the spears, the range being so close there was no missing our mark. The fighters had stood suddenly still as if turned to ebony statues in their utter amazement; half of them had by now lost their weapons and when we again began potting the spears, the near victors, with bellowing shouts of fright, turned and fled.

Well pleased, we scrambled down amongst the surprised warriors whom we had defended. Their leader came forward to meet me in a dignified and friendly manner, touching his hand to his forehead, then placing it on my breast he muttered some

guttural sentences which none of us could understand. Again touching his own breast he said one word, "Watanka," but this also conveyed nothing to my mind. With gesticulations and all the eloquence I could muster in the Swahili language, I eventually made him understand I had my camp but a short distance away and would like him to go there. Evidently I conveyed my meaning for he nodded and stepped out beside me and so my strangely augmented party returned to camp.

I called for our indispensable interpreter, who, after a few preliminaries, caught on to the dialect and I soon learned that we had saved old Kitawiti's very own son from a horde of those lawless outcasts, who, like nomads of the desert, roam these parts, preying on any isolated parties with whom they may meet. The young chief thanked me effusively for our timely help and was insistent that we go as his welcome guests to his father, who would reward us with whatsoever we desired. I replied that we expected no reward but had acted merely because we did not wish to see him annihilated. Even though we had known the identity of the enemy we would not have wished to kill them. It was not our way, we explained, to take human life unless forced by extreme danger to ourselves.

Merely grunting a few more words of thanks to all this, the young chief took a step toward me and, before anyone could anticipate his action, he had taken a small spike from his pierced ear and stabbed me in the forearm, immediately plunging the small hollow instrument into his own arm. Then he repeated the operation and through the interpreter, in the most impressive tones, stated we were now blood brothers, which nothing on earth could alter or break and that anything he possessed was mine should I desire it.

Through the help of the Kikuyu, I asked him to go with me to Antoine. I explained my friend's sickness, his wound and our lack of medicine, and that I feared for his very life. I inquired if there was a good medicine-man in his village and, if so, to prove his blood brotherhood by immediately despatching some of his men for help to save my friend. To all this he listened gravely. Calling his little band, he selected two warriors who, I learned, were his fleetest. To them he gave instructions, promising that

to the first man reaching their village with his message he would give two cows and a new wife and, should the medicine-man arrive here before sundown that night, he would raise him—the winner—to the rank of chief. Then taking spear and shield, he placed the two runners in line and, clashing spear and shield together as their signal to start, the two dashed off.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of the medicine-man, the young chief informed me that he had requested his father to send his best doctor, one by the name of Butemba. Should he arrive he felt sure that with his exceptional skill and knowledge of herbs his magic would avail and Antoine would recover. From young Watanka I learned much about his father, Kitawiti, the Chief of the Wanandis, and if all he related was true, then this powerful old Chief had been much maligned. Most of the evil tales I had heard had emanated from petty chiefs and from the outlying smaller tribe chieftains and must have arisen through jealousies and imaginary wrongs. However, I did not intend to place too much credence in the son's eulogy of his illustrious father, for I remembered the gentle and mild-eyed chief M'Alinga who had fondly hoped to entrap us. I intended, therefore, going very cautiously.

Several warriors were sent out to fetch game and about an hour later they returned bearing a pair of fine fat impali, which we at once turned over to our cook with instructions to prepare in anticipation of the arrival of the men from Kitawiti's village.

Watanka now selected and instructed the fleetest of his remaining warriors to go towards the mountains and either catch or shoot with arrow a young eagle. Without a word the hunter streaked off. Curious, I asked Watanka what he wanted with an eagle. He informed me that the medicine-man, whom he felt sure would come, always used parts of a young eagle along with his concoctions of herbs for the treatment of high fever and inflamed wounds. Personally, I could not understand how any part of an eagle could diminish fever. However, Antoine's plight was such that any means of improving his present condition was welcome.

Suddenly, while meditating, I saw one of our outposts come rushing into camp with the news that a party of possibly one

hundred men were coming towards us from the north and, a mile in advance of the main body, were three natives rapidly heading our way. Watanka immediately instructed his warriors to meet and lead them to the camp as quickly as possible. A few minutes later the three strangers staggered panting into our little circle. Apparently explaining Antoine's urgent need, Watanka at once entered into an animated conversation with the tallest and ugliest of the three, who turned out to be none other than the great Butemba. The other two runners were his assistants, each of them carrying some small articles wrapped up in the dressed hide of the elusive okapi.

Butemba crossed to where Antoine was lying and, contrary to the custom of our own physicians, instead of feeling the patient's pulse, he placed his ear to Antoine's abdomen, then looked at the palms of his hands and at once gave instructions to his assistants. In the meantime he continued his examination by very gently stripping the wound in the patient's thigh. Opening up his own package he exhibited many articles which I felt would be of little use in this emergency, but the old wizard also had little packets of finely-ground herbs which he evidently understood thoroughly. Possibly the other impedimenta was merely material which he used to hoodwink members of his tribe into thinking he was able to work the miracles they expected of him. There were several small wooden bowls and a board of hardwood, all scrupulously clean. "Dr." Butemba appeared to understand hygiene, if nothing else, in the treatment of wounds. He now called for Watanka and asked if he thought of the eagle and was informed that more than three hours ago the best hunter had been sent for that indispensable ingredient, but that so far there was no sign of his return.

Butemba, evidently much perturbed at this news, set about mixing the various herbs with boiling water, after which he took a tiny stone vial from a recess in his belt and poured a few drops of emerald liquid into the concoction. Then draining off the liquid into another little bowl, he ordered his assistants to raise Antoine's head. Standing at the patient's back the medicine man placed his two first fingers like two hooks into Antoine's nostrils whilst one of his assistants held the jaw firmly down.

The result was the immediate gaping wide of the sick man's mouth and instantly down went the contents of that little bowl. Antoine was then gently laid down again and the three medicine men stood about his cot and in almost inaudible tones blended their voices in what sounded like a lullaby. Their voices rose and fell softly and sweetly, always harmonizing, until after a few minutes the old man stopped and, again placing his ear against Antoine's abdomen, waved his helpers aside. Antoine was sleeping peacefully. The three now set about their work in feverish haste. Stripping the injured leg, the headman commenced bathing and continued doing so until he had apparently softened the wound somewhat. Then taking a long thin piece of cane, he first dipped it into the solution from one of the little bowls, pushing it through the wound until he forced it out at the other side. It was a mercy Antoine was unconscious, for the pain of this operation must otherwise have been almost unendurable, but the old doctor seemed to know his work, for in the wake of it came much of the poison which had retarded the healing and caused so much fever and inflammation.

This operation was repeated several times; then the wound was thoroughly washed, after which the old healer was on the point of wrapping great palm leaves around the leg when the young hunter who had been sent to fetch the eagle came rushing up, staggered and fell at our feet from sheer exhaustion. In his hand he clutched a young eagle and, with a smile of satisfaction, rolled over flat on his back in order to get relief from his panting. Snatching up the bird, the elder medicine-man literally tore off its head, then ripping it open near the neck thrust in his hand, withdrawing it instantly. He clutched something which I could not see. With a satisfied grunt or two he handed the carcase over to one of his assistants, turned his back to us and washed whatever he had in a bowl of hot water. This done, he started pulverizing it in another bowl. Pouring a little of the contents of one of the bowls into his new concoction he again resorted to the little green vial mixing the whole together vigorously. (Although I tried to find out, I never learned what it was he took from the eagle for this concoction.) This he strained, allowing it to cool off whilst he finished the bandaging of Antoine's leg.

When this was done he administered the second dose of medicine and stated that my friend would sleep peacefully through the night and would be fit to travel to their village by sunrise.

For a few minutes I sat gazing at Antoine, wondering if all these antics of the reputedly skilful Butemba would save him. He certainly was sleeping the sound, untroubled, dreamless sleep of an infant. I must have sat longer than I thought for presently I was aroused by Jacobus at my side. He whispered: "Baas, cook have supper ready and all look hungry." Hardly had he uttered this welcome message when the vanguard of Kitawiti's warriors arrived on the fringe of our *bomba* and were received by Watanka, who instructed them to camp down within calling distance.

Early next morning twelve *machila* men (hammock carriers) with the litter, or hammock, were ranged alongside Antoine. Carefully lifting him into the litter, they swung off in a long steady stride which gave no jerky motion, and before the sun had fully risen the whole of our combined forces had started their long, slow and difficult journey. Persistently forging ahead, towards late afternoon we reached the outskirts of Kitawiti's stronghold, hidden away amongst the crags and gullies of this almost inaccessible part of the range; yet in an hour's tramp of the village one could be as if transplanted into another country amidst lands where game abounded. Valleys and tree-covered slopes appeared to spring out of the rugged landscape like beautiful emeralds, in direct contrast to the remaining jagged and barren parts of the surrounding country. The whole was intersected by deep chasms and mighty cliffs. No wonder Kitawiti's stronghold was well nigh impregnable!

Looking over this part of his domain, I decided that Kitawiti, even if tyrannical, was also a wise and far-seeing ruler, for here was water and food aplenty. Gushing from these hill streams was sweet mountain water containing an abundance of fish, whilst the fertile land was cultivated and planted with grain and vegetables. To the casual observer, it was a land of peace, sunshine and plenty, in spite of the reputed cruelty and tyranny that reigned throughout almost the entire part of this inland monarch's domain.

We were received with much ceremony and kindness by Kitawiti himself, who stood surrounded by his chiefs, medicine-

fetish men, his wives and daughters. Beyond them, his great army of spearsmen was formed in semi-circles. When I was saluted by the great one, all the warriors brought their spears down from the upright position until the tips just flicked the ground, at the same time shouting the one word "Whoye" with a thunderous roar to show their respect to their Chief and the guest who had saved the life of his son.

After thanking me, Kitawiti led me to a seat covered with a superb skin of the okapi and, in front of the great assemblage of his subjects, he spoke at length of their future ruler, Watanka; he reminded them of how on many occasions he, Watanka, through his strategy and valour, had routed enemies of the Wanandi's domain—their domain from time immemorable—and how his son had in single combat beaten all aspirants to the title of the best fighter in the army and once, with nothing better than a club, had beaten off a lion which had attacked a child of their village. This warrior and chief, his own son, had been saved from death at the hands of the fierce outlaws, the N'Bambikis, by this yellow-faced stranger now sitting by his side, who had brought the magic of his God to bear against the enemies of Watanka. He went on to relate how, in the generosity of my heart, I had even spared those murderers and without taking a single life had succoured his son and completely routed the pigs of the plains by magic, rendering their spears useless against the Wanandis. No reward could be too great for this yellow-faced stranger; the chiefs and himself were to refuse him nothing; they were to bring for his approval their most beautiful daughters, their cattle, or any possession of theirs which the stranger might desire. Then in a most impressive and majestic manner, this Negro king turned to me with a great flourish, saying: "Saviour of my son, ask what you wish and it shall be yours."

In suitable words I thanked him, his medicine-men and all his subjects and greeted them as my friends, assuring them that all I asked in return for my small service was the best care they could possibly give towards the recovery of my stricken friend. To this there were more roars of "Whoye," and with friendly words the great multitude commenced dispersing, the chiefs, councillors, medicine and fetish men remaining.

Kitawiti now led the way to what I later learned was his Assembly Chamber, where a great feast had been prepared. Placing Watanka on his left, he sat me on his right, this being with them, as with us, the distinction bestowed upon the honoured guest. The walls and floor of this great *bando* were lined with the skins of many animals, including a few of the rare okapi, and here and there jutting out from the walls, were numerous elephant tusks, rhino horns, and the most gorgeous collection of beautifully arranged Bird of Paradise feathers one could imagine. I suppose these feathers must have riveted my attention as Kitawiti, stepping to my side, asked if I would like the feathers. I thanked him but courteously declined. My refusal seemed to puzzle him for later in the evening when the feast was finished he referred to the incident by stating he hoped I would forgive his seeming meanness by offering such a small recompense as feathers, but that it was merely a fractional part of what he had intended rewarding me with for my wonderful services. Would I accept some of his own wives? How many cattle would I like? He assured me I could have as many robes as I wished and many presents of ivory.

All of these again, through my interpreter, I refused and, after a great deal of difficult translating, gesticulating, and expostulating, I eventually made him understand it was not my wish to acquire any of their wives, daughters, cattle, ivory, or anything else. However, I told him he could render me a great service without giving up any of his possessions.

"Blood brother of my son," he answered, "I implore you to make known to Kitawiti what service he can render you."

I explained that he could provide an escort for my sick friend as soon as he was sufficiently recovered and have him carried on a comfortable litter to M'Borga, and from there conveyed safely across the Semliki River into British territory. I wanted him left in the care of a trader at Fort Portal, to whom I would address a letter with explanations and instructions, as I wished arrangements to be made for Antoine to be taken to Nairobi, where he would have the best possible care during his convalescence and await my return probably about four months from the present time.

The old Chief's eyes brightened with emotion and joy at the realization of being able to render me such a service and

forthwith gave instructions for his chief medicine man, Butemba, to present himself at once. On his entry everyone excepting Kitawiti, including Watanka, made obeisance to this skilled medicine man of the Wanandis who, touching first his breast, then his lips, and lastly his forehead with the fingers of his right hand, silently bowed his head to his King, saying: "Thou commandest me, O Kitawiti; your servant and friend is here to command!"

Kitawiti smiled kindly and bade the great man sit beside him, asking how it was with the friend of "yellow-face" and would he recover strength enough to withstand the strain of a long and arduous journey.

"The Gods have spoken, Great Kitawiti," answered the medicine man, "they have smiled on the stranger. Butemba's skill in the treatment of wounds and fevers has proven favourable and the pale one will recover sufficiently in four days to make the journey."

Signalling to his son, Watanka, the old Chief asked him what form of reward he had contemplated making to his blood-brother for having saved his life. To which Watanka replied there was nothing I could ask that Watanka would not do or give. Patting his son's back, the old King smilingly announced that he had for him the most important mission that had so far fallen to his lot—that of being in charge of the escort for Antoine and delivering him safely into the hands of his friends at M'Borga.

"My son, hearken well to your father's admonitions," he said solemnly. "Should anything happen to your charge, woe to you on your return. Select your own warriors and take as many as will ensure safety and ease for your guest for the path will be strewn with peril and hardships. The journey with the sick man is far and rugged, but I have faith in you, my son Watanka. Fail not, my son," he warned, "for on your successful return with proof of the safe delivery of Bwana Antoine Vosion at Fort Portal I shall have prepared for you the greatest feast and dancing the Wanandis have ever had. It shall be the feast and dance in honour of Watanka's wedding to Musemba Bolamba! Ah! my son, so, be not surprised. Did you suppose your old father was blind?" The old man shook his head.

"I have known for a long time your desire to marry the

beautiful, if rather too fair, daughter of the Chief Esonga Bolamba. So be it, my son. On your return you shall marry this son-robber and have all the slaves you desire. Be off now and prepare your safari. And may the great spirits guard and bring you safely back."

After this little homily there followed a general conversation between the chiefs, councillors and medicine-men. Meanwhile great gourds containing native-made beer were passed around, the drink being ladled up by a long scoop-like spoon carved from a similar large gourd. I had to drink my share when my turn came, naturally, if only in courtesy to my host, but each time I lifted that ladle to my lips I thought of all the black mouths it had previously caressed and when I saw the slimy-looking fibrous substance of the inside part of the ladle I felt anything but a desire to drink; but with a smile and a big gulp I downed the sour-tasting liquid. It must take an awful amount of it to cause intoxication as I saw them all absorb tremendous quantities, yet never a bleary eye did I see, although the soupy concoction had begun to make me feel sleepy.

As soon as I felt this symptom I begged to be excused from the august presence of the corpulent one and to retire to the *bando* set aside for me. Arriving at my *bando* I was surprised to find a small rush glimmering within and upon peering inside saw one of Kitawiti's comely daughters squatting on the ground beside Antoine's pallet ceaselessly fanning him with a huge palm leaf. Antoine was still sleeping so I asked her through the Kikuyu, who was almost my shadow during these days, who had sent her there. "My father," she replied, "at the request of Butemba. The sick one must be kept free from mosquitoes and made cool." I assured her that the invalid was sleeping peacefully and was also quite cool and that I could now fan him for the rest of the night. She appeared puzzled and not at all pleased at this suggestion for her to vacate, and continued her fanning. Then she commenced to croon a soft melody.

From a native's viewpoint she was a most charming girl of not more than seventeen years with a figure which would have done credit to a mannequin. Speaking through the Kikuyu, I informed her that it was my desire to prepare for sleep. This

remark had not the effect I had hoped for. Instead of getting up and going, she merely broadened out into a smile and remarked to the Kikuyu that she would be happy to fan me also as soon as I was ready. Here was a quandary. Turning to the young chief, N'Ulembeba, who had accompanied me to my *bando,* I asked how I could induce the girl to return to her *bando* without hurting her pride. He said that the King Kitawiti had done me the greatest honour possible in giving me his youngest and most beautiful daughter, the Princess Omaba Loanza. I was to be envied, he thought—a most fortunate man, for it would mean my becoming a great chief of the Wanandis. This sounded very fine, but I did not want a dusky maiden as I had my own ideas of such affairs and had no wish to be snared into becoming a Wanandi. I explained that I was too tired to entertain guests this night; I desired sleep and, while I deeply appreciated the great Chief's generosity, he, N'Ulembeba, must help me get the princess home to her *bando.*

Beckoning me outside he whispered a plan to the Kikuyu who in turn handed the conversation on to me. Then we three re-entered the *bando.* Immediately kneeling down I commenced muttering lamentations; meanwhile my boy also knelt in seeming reverence. We kept this up for some time, then looking around at the girl I observed she was intently watching us, so I felt this was the moment to try the experiment. Going over to her and gently taking her hand I raised her to a standing position. Then through the interpreter I explained to her that it was the month of the white man's fast, during which time we had to abstain from frivolities and live apart from the opposite sex. Since our fast month would not be up for a further six days and, knowing her noble birth and the high esteem in which she would regard her guest's customs, I prayed her to leave me in peace until my fasting time was up. This apparently satisfied her, as these uncivilized savages, who thought nothing of gathering a few heads of their enemies had, at the same time, a profound respect for the religious customs of others. Shyly sidling up to me she whispered, as I learnt later: "Remember in six days, Bwana," and vanished into the darkness of the night.

Having been more or less forced by circumstances to agree

on taking young chief N'Ulembeba on a hunt, there was nothing for it but to liquidate my promise; therefore, my greatest desire, next to finding the supposed smallest Pygmies and perhaps discover the fate of old Chief M'Abuta's sons, was an insatiable desire to bag an okapi. I wanted to see with my own eyes this strange animal, it being not so very long ago that this almost mythical animal had first been discovered by white men. Similar in characteristics to a giraffe, it is also much the shape of the zebra, whilst the colourings are distinctly different from any other particular animal. Could the okapi be all that survived of the legendary unicorn? There is material enough for this to be presumed, even though it may appear a preposterous idea, for later, when amongst the Pygmies, I had the opportunity of inspecting the skull of one of these extraordinary animals, it was easy to trace a central protuberance in the skull or possibly the rudiments or vestiges of a third horn.

Hoping for a possible great day's sport, I gathered around me most of the young chiefs and my own faithful Capera, and a few of the boys from my safari. Leaving Jacobus and the remainder of the boys in charge of Antoine we set out. Our guides led us out toward the lowlands lying due west and within an hour's march we had reached the elephant grass. This grass which fringed the thinned-out edges of the jungle was very dense and reached a height of eleven feet. Emerging from the grass, we had travelled some quarter of a mile into the undergrowth when one of Kitawiti's scouts rushed back with the news that just ahead, on either flank of us, he had seen natives in full war dress, whom he thought were N'Bambikis.

We did not want to be taken by surprise nor did we desire to return without having had the opportunity of bagging at least an impali and possibly an elephant or two. Therefore we decided on a skirmishing formation with a view to encircling our trackers. The young chiefs of the Wanandis were all for the immediate annihilation of that blood-lusting tribe, but not being personally interested in their tribal enmities, I preferred keeping clear of any native bloodshed and advocated that, as we were on a peaceful game hunt, we should not spoil our sport by entering now into a hunt of the N'Bambikis.

My Wanandi companions listened attentively and agreed willingly enough. In fact, later, when I had time to review the situation, I was aware they had shown too much acquiescence and, as subsequent acts proved, they had done so purposely in order to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity of revenging themselves on their natural and hereditary enemies, without any interference from me.

Some of the swiftest of Watanka's warriors were sent out on either flank with orders to get ahead and around in front of the enemy. Others were sent well out on the flanks to prevent them from breaking through and escaping. The remainder were then scattered out into a half-circle at the rear, thereby making it impossible for the N'Bambikis to retreat and escape once the scouts, which had been sent in advance, had reached their position. I did not feel at all satisfied with the outlook and questioned the young chief Watanka about the possibilities of any actual fighting. He assured me that his warriors had no instructions to fight but, should the N'Bambikis attempt to attack his men, he could not be held responsible for the outcome. I had a feeling that he would be glad should such an encounter be provoked; he seemed all keyed up and ready for anything.

I had not long to wait. Cries were soon audible from the front. I caught an occasional view of natives rushing back and toward the outer flanks only to be driven in until some twenty-five N'Bambikis were being gradually wedged closer and closer into a bunched mass. The warriors of Watanka were yelling hideously whilst the others, although showing no fear, had the appearance of men already doomed. I really never did know whether Watanka meant to annihilate them wholesale or not. The poor wretches, unable to retreat or move either way, were driven to desperation and suddenly let fly with arrows and spears. This, to my mind, was what Watanka had planned. That flight of arrows and spears spelt the doom of that small group of N'Bambikis. The conflict was terrible; there was an utter disregard of personal safety on both sides, the hatred shown was a thing of unprintable cruelty. I would not permit any of my own boys to participate in this bloody feud and, apart from using my rifle once in order to save Chief N'Ulembeba from a ghastly wound and possibly death, I kept to the part of an onlooker.

The fight really lasted but a few minutes. There were a mere half-dozen of the N'Bambikis left and I could not stand there any longer and see these few tortured and butchered. Calling on Capera and my other boys who had rifles, I gave the order to be ready to fire. Then calling on Watanka in a loud voice I proceeded to fire both barrels over his head. This caused instant consternation. Then, aiming at one of the N'Bambikis' spears, I fired, sending it spinning from the native's hands. During the momentary lull I informed Watanka that I could not stand by and witness this ruthless slaughter and that he must permit the remainder to depart in peace, that if he did not do so, brother or no brother, I would shoot the first Wanandi who molested the others further. Watanka gave several grunts, evidently meant as orders to guard the N'Bambikis, then stepping across to my side, glared savagely at me, asking through the Kikuyu what I meant by interfering with their victory over the hateful swine of the jungle, since they were murderers who would rob and torture their own parents for a goat and, were we to spare them, they would turn at the very next opportunity and repay us for our mercy by taking our lives. I reminded Watanka that he had promised his father that there was nothing the Bwana would ask and be refused and I desired that these men go free.

"So be it, my brother," he answered, "but it is my duty to warn you. I trust the Great Spirit will shield you from their evilness, for they respect nothing."

He called on his warriors to fall back and, drawing me a little closer to the group of doomed ones, he addressed them in his own language pointing several times at me and telling them what a fool he considered me to let them go. Then as he crashed his spear against his shield, his men opened out and, as the half-dozen filed past us, each in turn looked at me and uttering the monosyllable "Whoye" were soon swallowed up in the jungle.

Watanka appeared to look upon me with less hero-worship than before. However, I felt satisfied that I had prevented what I considered would have been nothing short of cold-blooded murder.

I now turned my undivided attention to the business which had brought us to the jungle and, after a short conference with Watanka and his chiefs, we again deployed the beaters into the

dense grass. Shortly we were rewarded by one of the boys returning to the main vanguard with news of a small herd of elephants disporting themselves in a big pool down by the river. Reaching the spot, we cautiously pushed our way through the grass to the water's edge. Peering through the tall grass we had a wonderful view of those great mammals in their native playground. They were taking their ablutions and playfully squirting muddy water at each other. One youngster was particularly playful. I saw him draw up his trunk its full limit of muddy water then lean across to his nearest brother, or cousin, or whoever it might have been, and deliberately shoot the whole cargo into the other's ear.

Instant pandemonium took place. The offended one sprang up and winding his trunk around his tormentor's ear would have torn that useful organ out had not one of the elders interfered by belabouring them both with her trunk. The two little elephants went squealing and floundering like a couple of baby hippos until that bathing pool was churned up into liquid mud instead of remaining a nice little crystal stream. Meanwhile the elder members of the herd had sought the quietude of the banks where they stood apparently enjoying these antics. Then suddenly the harassed mother slipped and flopped, her size and weight sending the muddy water like a tidal wave over the elders standing so quietly on the opposite bank. Here was further cause for discontentment, more squeaks and trumpetings. We were almost bursting with suppressed laughter. The way those elephants walloped each other with their trunks would have created a furore in a circus! When one got in a full whack, it sounded like an explosion and appeared to fall with sufficient force to stave in the side of a house. The climax came when a youngster secured a hold on the tail of an old bull. The old fellow squealed and trumpeted fiercely but the little fellow would not leave go until the old warrior suddenly slipped down on his haunches almost crushing the little chap. Had it not been for the mother, who came up on the run and with her buttocks pushed the old fellow aside, that youngster would have played no more.

By this time there were only two or three of the younger elephants remaining in the water and, as the bulls now offered a target hard to miss, I decided this was the most favourable

opportunity I would ever have of showing my friends the magic of my guns. I had already instructed Watanka how to hold a rifle when firing and particularly how to take aim; so, first placing both him and Capera in advantageous positions for an excellent shot, I took a position myself and gave the signal to fire. Indescribable confusion instantly broke loose amongst the giant animals on the opposite bank. Two bulls went down—as did also Watanka, full on his back from the recoil of the gun. With a terrified look he flung the gun from him, at the same time muttering what I took for Wanandi curses. Instantly recovering himself, he was ready to spring forward with his own weapon, which he understood how to use with much better skill than the white man's heavy calibre elephant rifle.

Restraining Watanka, I pointed across the little stream to one of the great bulls which was only wounded, though not badly enough to make him harmless. With his eyes he was searching the dense undergrowth on our side of the stream; his ears were beating back and forth like violently agitated punkahs, his trunk well outstretched. These symptoms meant that he was after someone and that someone must be one of us. Before we had time even to think he had flopped into the still muddy river and was making straight for the clump of bushes where we were hidden. Less time than it takes to tell, he was climbing up the bank but a few paces from us. Watanka, probably thinking there was no escape, dashed towards the elephant with uplifted spear ready to sell his life dearly if need be. Down came the elephant's trunk fair and square on poor Watanka's skull. It was an unmerciful wallop and had it been anything but a black man's skull it must have crumpled under such a blow. Instantly my own and Capera's rifle barked, the muzzles almost touching that giant head towering above us. We barely had time to snatch Watanka's prostrate body away when that mountain of flesh and bone slumped, with an earth-shaking thud, right at our very feet.

I now turned my attention to Watanka expecting that his neck must have been broken, but after a few minutes he opened his eyes in a dazed manner and tried to look around, but as the movement gave him pain he was content to lie quietly. I had much to learn regarding the hardness of a Negro's skull and the

toughness of his neck, for in a few minutes Watanka again opened his eyes and intimated his desire for water. Soon after he began rubbing his neck, made a few passes across the top of his head, smiled, sat up, looked around and then stood up as if nothing had happened. Giving a few short, sharp orders to his young chiefs and warriors to commence stripping the meat, the whole lot of them immediately fell upon the carcases, one on each side of the stream, with unbridled ferocity. Within a very short time there was nothing but the skeletons and tusks left. As I had previously witnessed one or two of these disgusting sights, I knew how futile it would be to expect any of Watanka's men to assist me in hacking off the tusks until every vestige of flesh had been stripped from those bones.

Watanka was now in high glee at the success of our hunt and I learned that the Wanandis had never, in the history of their tribe, secured more than one elephant in a period of several months and even then only after much arduous work, such as the setting of traps, which entails a great deal of labour owing to their immensity. Watanka informed me that his father would more than ever wish to make me a great chief of their tribe for, with such wonderful machines of warfare, we would be able to conquer the whole world!

It was nearing dusk when we returned to camp. The porters and warriors, laden down with tusks and meat, were in high spirits and kept up a continuous chattering. We were met on the outskirts of the village by hundreds who had been awaiting our return.

High festivities held sway that night. Kitawiti—great in size and great in power—arranged a gathering of the whole tribes resident in this particular district, for the Wanandis had large semi-independent tribes scattered all over this vast region, each governed by a chief who, although belonging to the district and tribe that he ruled over, was nevertheless placed and kept in his exalted position by the paramount chief, Kitawiti. So long as these underling chieftains were obedient to the despotic rule and demands of their king, all went well with them. But should anyone of them—no matter how far-flung his section from Kitawiti's stronghold—disobey, or be tardy in his quota of provisions, skins

and ivories and all indispensable commodities, he was sent for under heavy escort to show reason to the tyrant. The reports of these periodical visitors to Kitawiti had a most salutary effect in keeping up regular and punctual delivery of what were, so to speak, their taxes.

On this night the warriors were out in all their war paint, looking proudly around with admiring glances toward the comely black maidens who had come out in their best, even if scanty, dance regalia. These were marvellously lithesome, going through their muscular dances with a precision and barbaric rhythm of rippling muscles and stamping of feet, all the while keeping up their tribal chants in a mellow full-throated harmony so characteristic of the blacks.

After the warriors had given a series of war dances which, toward the end, took on a very realistic turn, the older men and women of the tribe carried out huge gourds filled with native beer. Large chunks of those lately demised elephants were also brought forward, being carried between two persons holding the ends of a young sapling which had been thrust through the succulent morsels for convenience of portage. There was plenty; there could be no excuse for leaving this grand Wanandi feast feeling hungry. The climax came when, to make my stay amongst them happy and to show me their extreme gratitude and the honour they considered due me, the Princess Omaba Loanza was led to my side by her happy and magnanimous sire, who, with a gracious wave of his huge paw, bade her be seated by my side, ready to administer to my needs during the feast. It seemed to me that I was being treated with too much kindness. I did not want their beer nor their rancid-smelling elephant meat and, above all, I certainly did not want his smiling, shiny, dusky daughter. However, I had a role to play until the morrow and until that time I must use artifice.

Since the Princess had apparently set her mind on securing me for her lawful husband and her despotic father was seemingly more than willing that this should be, I, therefore, throughout the feast and dance, regaled her with compliments of how sweet the beer was and how tasty the meat, assuring her I had never before seen such beauty as exhibited by the great Kitawiti's daughter;

but when she commenced looking too amorous I reminded her that my religion's fast time was not up for another two days. At this she looked rebuked and sad, whilst her large eyes seemed to say: "Ah, I had forgotten!"

At last, after the medicine-men had performed a few very crude tricks which, although apparently mystifying the natives, were plainly understandable to me, the night's orgy came to an end and gradually the concourse dispersed.

As soon as I was able to withdraw I visited Jacobus and, once he and Capera were together, I made known to them my plans for getting well away on the second night following, when, if all went well, Antoine would be many miles distant in the safe keeping of Watanka. I therefore decided that I would have all my own boys and camp paraphernalia prepared during the excitement of the departure of Antoine and his escort, so that we should be already prepared to leave on the second night as soon as the village had quieted down for the night. Travelling all night we should be able to place a fairly safe distance between ourselves and Kitawiti.

Early next morning the men who were to accompany Watanka were mustered and bade have all their packs of food ready within the time of the buffalo hump walk, meaning the time it would take to walk from where we stood to the mountain so called and, according to our computation of time, about half an hour. Meanwhile Kitawiti, his many fat wives, his son and daughters, were breakfasting, but although invited I did not attend, excusing myself on the pretext of getting Antoine ready, as in truth I was. Antoine, although far from well, was on the road to recovery, but I greatly doubted the possibility of his ever again having the full use of his injured leg. Placing his rifle fully loaded at his side under the blankets, I strapped his revolver to his left arm and, although having little fear of anything happening to him with Watanka in charge, I warned Antoine never to give up his firearms even for an instant. Giving him the most minute instructions and my letter to the agent at Fort Portal, I bade my old comrade au revoir.

Kitawiti, having finished his breakfast, now came out to greet us. Stepping to Antoine's side he inquired with genuine concern

after his health, and informed him that the carriers had everything which would ensure his comfort during the journey. He then called Watanka, who was dressed in his impressive head-dress of the leopard skin trimmed with strips of okapi skin, with a bunch of gorgeous egret feathers stuck straight up at the back of the crown, the whole ensemble making Watanka by far the tallest of all the warriors and chiefs around him.

Placing a hand on his son's shoulder and pointing to the north, the old chief said: "My son, thou hast a long and difficult journey but I have faith in your powers of endurance and strategy. We all owe a great debt to the Bwana; it is in your hands to redeem it. Show your gratitude, Watanka, by delivering your charge safely into the hands of those to whom the Bwana sends thee. Fail in this, my son, and thou shalt be banished from the Kingdom of the Wanandis to dwell amongst thine enemies, the N'Bambikis, the rats of the jungle. Go, Watanka, and may the great spirits of your forefathers guard you and bring you safely back that thou mayest some day rule, justly and as wisely, over the destinies of the Wanandis as your father has done!" With these admonitions the old king pointed the path for his son to traverse. There were loud cries, and what I supposed were Wanandi cheers as the cavalcade set out, almost drowning Antoine's feeble call of "Adios"!

I stood for a while sadly watching the safari winding its way among the hills until it appeared no more than a thin thread trailing off to the edge of the world.

Turning, I found Kitiwiti regarding me sympathetically. His apparent deep understanding made me more reluctant than ever to leave him in the manner contemplated, but I dared not remain, as every day only added to the complications of the situation.

Gathering myself together I again thanked him for his kindness and generosity toward Antoine and myself. I then excused myself and hastened off for a further *indaba* with Jacobus and N'Oballa.

CHAPTER 9.

LONG before daybreak on the second day after Antoine's departure Jacobus awakened me by gently tugging my hair and whispering: "Time to go, Baas." It took us half an hour to complete our arrangements. I sent a couple of boys scouting stealthily around to ascertain if the coast was clear before venturing forth. Silently we departed, slipping along in single file. I wished at the time the moon had covered her face for we could have been seen almost as plainly as though the sun were shining. However, it proved invaluable to us later.

We had passed the last *bando* of the village and were making for the gorge through which we must pass in order to reach the open country, when suddenly Capera, who was leading, raised his hand in warning and, pointing, bade me look ahead and whispered: "Kitawiti's guard." Clearly outlined against the sky I made out a native, sitting, spear between his legs, watching the valley towards which we were travelling. Here was a dilemma! I was certain he would not permit us to pass without awakening the whole village. N'Oballa, creeping close and guessing what was passing in my mind, whispered that he would settle with the Wanandi. I nodded acquiescence, but ordered him not to hurt the fellow seriously; merely to tie him up so that we could be well away before the guard was found and released. N'Oballa's reply was to grin in a manner that decided me to go along with him. We crept forward until within a few paces when, either warned by instinct or hearing the slight movement of a twig or pebble, the Wanandi looked around as if sensing our presence.

Instantly he spotted us, but before he had time to overcome his astonishment N'Oballa, with a prodigious leap, sprang at the fellow. In his terrific effort to reach his victim in one bound, he slightly miscalculated the distance with the result that he landed a few inches short of the Wanandi and was therefore unable to

get the hold he had expected. The two crashed to earth locked in a deadly struggle. N'Oballa, a powerful man, was no match for the Wanandi; plainly he was getting the worst of it and when I saw my hope occupying the under position with the momentary expectation of the other's knife taking an active part in his departure from this planet, I thought it time to interfere. Forthwith I landed a nicely timed blow on that guard's point. N'Oballa then fashioned a twig across the savage's open mouth with a thong of raw-hide tied around the back of his neck, thereby making it impossible for the fellow to give any alarm. Then, fastening his legs and arms, we left him comfortably placed against a rock to be found by his companions at what we trusted would be a much later time.

The path, we hoped, was now clear and we therefore proceeded in haste, greatly helped by the clear moonlight, for which we were now very grateful. Had we attempted the journey in darkness down that defile, strewn from end to end as it was with broken boulders and jagged pieces of rock which tore the natives' feet cruelly, there would have been quite a few injuries and considerable delay. My aim was to get as far away as possible by daybreak and more into the open country. Once out on the plains, there would be little, if any, fear of Kitawiti's warriors causing any serious harm, as I would be able to keep them at a long distance with my rifles. The real danger would be in the event of a large force being sent after us; but this exigency I did not anticipate.

The gulch through which we were travelling must have been formed by some great cataclysm which had destroyed every quality of the ground necessary for animal and vegetable life. By midnight we had reached the grassy slopes leading to the lower country towards the west. Leading the safari a little distance ahead, I bade the porters unload and take a short well-earned rest. Half an hour later we were on the move again and continued pushing on rapidly until well after sunrise. I had taken the north-western route instead of going due west, as I intended getting down to the upper reaches of the tributaries of the Congo River and lowlands by the shorter but more difficult route of the low mountain range several miles to the north-west.

Shortly after noon we reached a small stream surrounded by trees and tall grass. I decided that this would be a good place to rest and hide during the excessive heat of the day, in preparation for the late afternoon and evening's march. Another reason for haste was the fact that our food supply was barely sufficient to last a couple of days.

Posting three guards with instructions to keep a sharp lookout, I ordered Capera and Jacobus to take it in turns to post new guards every two hours, thereby giving each member of the safari an equal chance of rest and sleep, after which I took a couple of well-earned hours' rest myself.

On awakening, Capera, N'Oballa and Jacobus awaited my attention and I could see they had something of importance to communicate.

Jacobus spoke up, saying that an hour after I had fallen asleep one of the lookouts had thought he caught the gleam of spears in the sunlight far away to the south, but had not seen it again. Taking my glasses and going back a couple of miles, Jacobus had climbed an elevation from where he had a commanding view of the country for miles around. After searching that part of the country indicated by the lookout, he had caught the gleam of many spears which were travelling fast in a southerly direction on the route which Kitawiti naturally assumed we were following. Jacobus stated that it was while the warriors were traversing a depression in the ground or possibly while travelling behind some hills that the guard could no longer see the glint of steel in the sunlight. He, Jacobus, had had a splendid view of them and at times could make out the dim figures of the men themselves. He estimated that there were about two hundred. He had watched them until they disappeared, travelling swiftly in a south-westerly direction.

This was good news, for if they followed that route for even one more night they would never be able to overtake us. By that time we should be over that low range and well towards the lowlands beyond. Allowing ourselves barely time for a few scraps of food, we reached the western side of the range which divides this mountainous territory.

Our path was now strewn with every conceivable difficulty

and danger. Hardships and privations proved to be our constant companions; food became scarce, chiefly on account of the undesirability of using our firearms. I decided to go on for another day as we were; and it was on this memorable day that I had a new experience in the eating line.

We had camped near a stream, the banks of which were heavily timbered with big trees; vines an inch in diameter and many yards long twisted and twined themselves around the trees and bushes in a most bewildering manner. Without a sharp machet with which to carve a path, it would have been impossible to reach the edge of the water. Whilst some of the boys were cutting a pathway to the bank I sat down on the ground with drooping head and spirits, and a great void below the waistline, to consider our unenviable position. Before my mind's eye hung visions of the dainty morsels I had wasted in the past. Whilst thus ruminating, my attention was attracted by the chattering of an ape in the trees almost above my head. Picking up my rifle and, with hardly a thought, I took aim. Down she flopped almost at my feet.

Scarcely had this thought crossed my mind when, with a pitiful little screech and childlike sobbing, a baby monkey came clattering down and, without a thought of danger to itself, ran forward, throwing itself on its mother's breast. That poor little baby flung its arms around its mother's neck and sobbed and whined like a human being in mortal anguish. I felt like a murderer and turned away. It was heart-breaking and, hungry as I was, I swore I would not touch cooked monkey and strode off in remorse and disgust at my impetuosity. To eat that monkey after what I had witnessed would, it seemed to me, place me on a level with Buhuni cannibals.

The boys now having cut a path to the water's edge, I decided I could take a much-needed bath. Our soap had long since been used up and the best substitute we had was the sandy mud of the banks. Refreshed but also twice as hungry as before, I wandered downstream a short distance. Here the only living things I found were a few slimy-looking mud crabs, small and repulsive-looking. I considered them impossible for even a starving man to eat. I must have strolled to the windward of our camp

for presently, as I was watching those little mud crabs darting in and out of their holes, my nostrils were assailed by an aroma that aroused me to a keen alertness. Was I dreaming? No! Surely enough, wafted on the breeze I could—or thought I could—recognise the enticing odour of roast beef. Hastening back to camp, I was welcomed by Jacobus, who informed me that, in a few minutes, dinner would be ready! I did not ask where they had secured the food. In fact, my intuition prompted me to eat, ask no questions, and be thankful Providence had thus so opportunely supplied our needs. Well, after all, some vows seem made only to be broken and so for this night at least we were all well, if not elegantly, fed.

Since leaving the east coast my plan had been to travel north-west all the time until I accomplished what I had set out to achieve—proving or disproving the existence of that tribe of strange Pygmies. They had, presumably, never been seen by white man, and tales of them had come only through natives who, fleeing the vengeance of the fetish man or punishment for some crime against their brethren, had penetrated to that almost unknown wildest and densest part of the Congo. Although, for years, tales of the Pygmies existing near the north-central border of the Congo had been more or less contradictory, they had nevertheless been persistent enough to warrant one's placing some credence in them. The reports had gone so far as to assert that this particular species of Pygmy was existent in no other part of the globe. They were credited with being the smallest of all their kind and were supposed to be the descendants of the Malays who, a thousand years ago, spread themselves over widely-flung parts of the world. Some are supposed to have reached as far south as Madagascar; others to New Zealand and South Africa, and many of the smaller islands of Melanesia and Polynesia.

These particular Malays were of the Indonesian caste or, in other words, non-Negrito, non-Papuan, and non-Melanesian, and were said originally to have occupied the Malay Archipelago. The stories also indicated that the Pygmies practised a religion foreign to this part of Africa. They were said to have carved images which, from the descriptions, strongly resembled Chinese or Indian Buddhas. Whatever they or their customs might prove

to be, I was determined to find out more about them before leaving this part of the world. To do this I must first enter and cross that almost impenetrable jungle country occupied for the most part by the treacherous N'Bambikis, and by another tribe reputed to be the most degraded and cruel of all African natives. These were known as the M'Amogas.

The two outlaw tribes were made up from many of the organized and law-abiding tribes of the Congo and countries surrounding its borders and they were all more or less wanted by the Governments of these neighbouring countries for crimes which would, in most cases, mean the penalty of a stretched neck; hence the desperate character, the extreme cruelty and continuous warfare between these two bands of murderous thieves. It was, therefore, with many misgivings that I set out on this journey into the "Bad Man's Country" of the Congo.

CHAPTER 10.

NEXT morning, with hunger somewhat appeased and courage renewed, we set out towards the nearest part of the country which offered good possibilities for game. All day under a blazing sun we trekked, always toward the lower country. Our water had given out, partly through evaporation, and I had some doubt as to whether we would reach water that night. By this time we were again famished, the last remnants of crushed rice and dates having long since disappeared, and to make matters worse, the boys were beginning to show signs of discouragement and fatigue.

During our day's journey we had seen no living thing—even the flies seemed to be absent; nothing at all appeared to live in this zone, although strangely enough, it was practically surrounded by fertile country. We were unprepared for such a barren stretch; those distant patches of trees and grass we had seen were much farther off than we had thought. That great dark patch far toward the horizon was undoubtedly the edge of the great forest which we had to skirt, and it looked just as distant as when seen early in the morning. In the last couple of hours of our march I had to pick up first one, then another of the boys who, weakened by hunger, thirst and fatigue, were less courageous than some of the others. Promises meant nothing to them any longer; urgings meant little more; and so I had to resort to that oftentimes abused method of "being cruel to be kind." Indeed, I had to resort to corporal punishment in order to save their very lives.

All at once I heard Jacobus, who had gone on in advance, shouting excitedly in Dutch. Looking up, I saw him waving his arms wildly, firstly in gesticulations suggestive of my going towards him, then indicating a spot in front of the other side of the hill on which he was standing. Hastening forward, I attempted to

run up the hill, but I had miscalculated my strength. Slowing up and panting with the exertion, I finally reached his side. What a sight met my gaze! Just over the other side from where we stood, stretching gently away to the north-west almost as far as the eye could see, were undulating plains intersected by low hills, covered by a dense growth of trees and verdure. But most gladsome sight of all, curving between hills and valleys about three miles away, was a winding, sparkling river.

With shouts of joy I leapt down that hill, forgetting my hunger and weakness, and in excited words conveyed the news to my safari. Fatigue vanished; smiles again appeared and, to my unbounded amazement and pleasure, some of the boys started taking up their old happy chanting of the days when food was plentiful. Spirits buoyed up and strength momentarily renewed, we marched the remainder of the distance cheerful and determined. It was still daylight when we reached our haven. Like frantic animals we all dashed for the water; some, in their ungovernable eagerness, plunged right into the stream up to their necks. As soon as I had slaked my thirst I threw off my clothes and abandoned my parched body to that clear crystal stream.

Whilst bathing I heard the boys in excited conversation, and on swimming across to where some were standing up to their waists in the water I was greeted with cries of joy. One of them held aloft a wriggling full-bodied fish about fifteen inches long. On close inspection I found the fish to possess a bone growing from under its throat straight down and slightly curved towards its belly; this bone was exactly the shape of a miniature curved cavalry sword blade and about two-and-a-half inches long. For what purpose nature had provided this unusual defence, I do not know, but after we had organized our forces and partly dammed up a portion of the river to hunt for these fish systematically, I found every one we caught possessing that formidable-looking weapon. We roasted them whole over the embers of our fires, and what a feast we had!

Next day we pursued our campaign of catching and eating fish and resting; in fact, with the abundance of plantain fruit and wild berries growing along the banks, I felt a desire to stay here indefinitely.

Cakes which Capera made with plantains and the oil from the fish proved quite palatable after one grew accustomed to the taste. We still had a small quantity of salt, but sugar was a thing of the past and, when one has no sweets of any kind, the system very soon craves anything with sweetness in it. Therefore, it gave me great pleasure when, having made known my desire to Jacobus, that same evening he presented me with a sticky, soft substance which somewhat resembled the sediment of partly-dissolved sugar found at the bottom of a tea-cup. He suggested I put this sticky mess on the plantain and fish-oil cakes. At first the combination of flavours was not very appetizing but, as I munched steadily, it gradually tasted less disagreeable until eventually, with the help of a little imagination, I could almost believe I was eating home-made bread and honey. On asking Jacobus what he had made the sweetmeat from, I learnt that the boys, hearing of my wishes, had sought out certain berries, from which they had, by boiling them down, secured the sticky sweet-flavoured compound.

We camped in this peaceful place for five days, during which we made several short journeys in an effort to secure small game, but with little success. Evidently we were as yet too far away from their usual haunts and the only thing to fall to my rifle was a large pau, or wild turkey. This, although giving us a change of diet, was barely sufficient to feed the whole safari. We had by this time become heartily sick of fish, fish cakes, and then more fish cakes, with imitation honey, so I reluctantly decided to turn my back upon this beautiful and restful spot which I had named "Smiling Water."

CHAPTER 11.

"SMILING WATER" had been left behind two days, and during our march we had again penetrated semi-jungle country extending to the upper tributaries of the Congo River. Here game was plentiful, as were also wild fruits and edible berries. Of water there was plenty; each day we had to cross one or two small streams in order to keep on our route.

Whilst resting on the bank of one of these small rivers preparatory to crossing, I had the good fortune to catch a fleeting glimpse of an okapi. Quick as I was and as I thought, silent, my ever-so-slight movement must have been sensed rather than heard from that distance, for, with a startled toss of its head, the okapi galloped off at top speed and was swallowed up in the denseness of the undergrowth. I was profoundly disappointed at losing this opportunity of getting my first okapi.

That night, tossing from side to side, I became obsessed with the idea of going after that okapi. Next morning I left Capera in charge of the main safari with instructions to remain there for the present. Jacobus and nine of the boys accompanied me across the stream into the dense jungle country beyond.

After a few hours' march the growth began to thin out and was replaced by larger trees. Birds of many species flitted about in great numbers. Sun-birds of exceptional beauty even amongst the many gorgeously plumed birds of equatorial Africa, flew about in clouds of possibly a hundred—each cloud a definite colour, some of a deep crimson, others of purple, lemon and green. Their plumage flashing in the sunlight like burnished metal presented an amazing spectacle. Parrots of every hue chattered and flew about us. Monkeys, chattering in the branches above us, would swing from tree to tree, following our progress with apparent interest and great glee for a time and then scurrying off in front of us like frightened infants.

It was quite understandable why so much animal life should be found in this particular place, for on every side were trees, some laden down with luscious fruits, others with nuts. The place appeared to be a realm of plenty for birds and animals alike. but as is ever the way of the jungle, there were one or two incidents which marred the peaceful beauty and sublimity of the scene. As usual I took the lead and was proceeding steadily when, at a startled yell, I turned quickly, just in time to see one of the boys burying his spear in the throat of a large leopard which, hidden on the lower branch of a tree, had quietly waited until one of the boys was passing under him; reaching down, the beast had ripped off part of his scalp. The wounded boy was now sitting on the ground holding his bleeding head and in terrible pain. Had the boy following him not been quick there is no knowing what damage would have been done by that fierce, cunning cat, but the second boy had buried his spear half its length in its body.

The leopard, or as many old-time hunters name it, the panther, may be found in many parts of the world. Its unenviable reputation of craftiness and fierceness is well known. Monkeys and birds fall an easy prey to this swift, silent hunter and, although it cannot be compared in strength with the lion or tiger, it has nevertheless other qualities which give the hunter more thrilling and dangerous moments than either of the two mentioned. Therefore this incident was fortunate in a way, as it put us on our guard. Wherever numbers of monkeys are found in the jungle, one may reasonably be sure of finding the cunning and persistent leopard.

About an hour before noon on this fateful day we reached a small stream beside which, much to my astonishment, I found traces of a recently discarded camp, the embers of a fire still being warm. This discovery gave me considerable concern as, from all available information, there should be no natives in this territory excepting the N'Bambikis and the M'Amogas and I had calculated that these tribes should still be some distance away. If I had miscalculated then it would be necessary for us to use much greater caution to avoid the possibility of being isolated from my main safari.

Two of the boys presently went down to the river to fill our canvas water bottles, but speedily returned with the alarming news that they had found several recently made footprints near the water's edge. A few minutes later some of them went down to refill our water bottles. Three of them had just dipped their bags into the river when, without the slightest warning, we heard the twang of many bows and almost at the same instant the zing of arrows. Two of the boys were struck—one clean through the neck and the other in the buttock. Pandemonium instantly broke loose amongst the boys, all dashing for shelter; just then I caught a glimpse of a number of natives some distance up and down the river, swimming to our side of the stream. They were trying to surround and cut us off. Jacobus and N'Oballa had already possessed themselves of a rifle, of which we had but four altogether, and a couple of revolvers, my other boys having only their spears. We therefore had to depend mostly upon the rifles, saving the revolvers for possible close work.

Pouring a volley into the dense undergrowth on the other side from whence I had seen the arrows take flight, I was gratified to hear a couple of hellish screams. Quickly we hauled the boy who had the arrow sticking through his neck back into the bush, but discovered he was already dead, the arrow having cut through the jugular vein. As for the other boy, we just slashed off the end of the dart and pulled it through the flesh—much to his discomfort. Hastening the little band away, I tried to make for a slight elevation from which I would be able to see what was coming towards us, at the same time keeping those human hyenas at a safe distance.

The horde of savages attacking us moved swiftly and, during the brief moment or two in which we were occupied in collecting the boys together and dragging the wounded one out of the river, they had already partly encompassed our position. As we retreated towards our little hill we were greeted on either side by showers of arrows. Occasionally a light throwing spear similar to the South African assegai whistled near our heads. Jacobus and the two other boys, as well as myself, kept up a desultory fire. A moment later another boy went down, transfixed by a spear, thus leaving Jacobus, myself and six boys.

By keeping up a rapid fire we were able to reach the base of the little knoll; once we reached the summit of that elevation it would be a fairly easy matter to keep that mad blood-lusting *impi* at a distance. Hardly had we taken a dozen steps up the side of that little rise, however, when, with fierce yells, another horde came pouring over its brow. They were smeared with white ash and had vari-coloured vegetable dye daubed grotesquely on their faces and bodies, giving them an unparalleled hideousness. I recognized the markings of the N'Bambikis whom, only a short time before, I had befriended. They were leaping in the air in uncontrollable ecstasy at their early expectations—possibly of a rich reward in the shape of our guns. Jacobus, at my side, and the other two boys with rifles, were helping to keep the rear free. Twice the fiends had broken through our rear, only to be driven back each time by our revolvers, which were used with deadly effect at such close range. The situation was extremely serious. Our ammunition could not last much longer and the possibility of successfully sending a boy out to the main safari was a remote one. Suddenly I heard a new chorus of hoarse yells at my back, and whirling about, saw a rush being formed by the other N'Bambikis.

Two gigantic natives had burst through our little rearguard. The foremost black giant, when almost on top of us, went down from a revolver shot which proved to be my last cartridge; the second, with a leap, was at me with raised spear. I could almost feel that blade being pushed through my body. Any movement of mine would have been too late to have saved me from that descending blade. And then, Jacobus, seeing the danger to his beloved Baas, threw himself on my chest, taking the fatal blow in my stead.

My rage was uncontrollable. I hardly knew what I was doing. Tearing my machet from my belt, with one sweep I literally sliced that giant savage's head from his body, then turning swiftly to meet the others from the brow of the hill I was astounded at seeing them turn in the greatest disorder and fear, and go tearing down the other side. Gazing off to the south I saw at a little distance another force of natives, some three hundred in number, swiftly bearing down towards our position. I knew

from their tall head-dress of feathers they were not N'Bambikis, but must be the dreaded M'Amogas, hereditary enemies of the N'Bambikis.

Sweeping swiftly on and without halting, they seemed to scoop up any stray N'Bambikis and tore on after the main force who, only a moment or two since, had disappeared over the hill. It was evident that it meant more to them to exterminate the others than to attend to doubtful affairs with ourselves. It is certain, however, that had these M'Amogas caught us in the same position as the N'Bambikis they would have been just as merciless. As it was, it seemed like an act of Providence for them to have arrived at this critical moment. They had probably been attracted to the spot by our heavy firing; also their scouts may have been dogging our mutual enemies. If only they had arrived a few moments earlier!

Kneeling beside Jacobus I lifted his head gently on my arm and poured the few remaining drops of spirits from my flask into his blood-frothed mouth. Opening his eyes he attempted to smile but it was a pitiful effort, heart-breaking to witness. As he made a supreme effort to speak to me, I put my ear close to his lips whilst he managed to murmur: "Jacobus happy—Baas safe—yah —Baas go home to Cape where niggers are good."

Then making another effort to smile his eyes closed and his body, relaxed, slipped from my arms. Jacobus, my boy, my comrade of many years, staunch and loyal to me in danger and hardships, was gone. My grief was uncontrollable. I could not restrain my bitterness. I felt then that I must go out and join the M'Amogas and help wipe out those hyenas of the jungle who, in form only, resembled human beings. Taking off my shirt I wrapped it gently around poor Jacobus, then slumped at his side and gave full vent to my pent-up feelings.

Presently, becoming calmer, I realized that every moment we remained here the danger increased as it would be only a matter of time before the M'Amogas would return to deal with us. Getting the boys together I instructed some of them to scoop out with every possible haste a shallow temporary resting place for Jacobus, and another for the remaining three who had also given their lives so bravely. I put the remaining boys to work gathering

rocks. When the graves were filled they placed these rocks gently over their fellow comrades and scattered smaller ones around the bases of the graves in order to disguise as far as possible the fact of any digging having taken place. When this sad task had been completed we speedily departed on our return to our main party.

On our return journey we neither saw nor heard our enemies. I surmised that the N'Bambikis, having had a few moments' start in their race for life, had given the M'Amogas a long, hard chase. I felt sure that, otherwise, they would have been back already.

A very sad and bedraggled party we were on reaching camp on the other side of the stream although Capera, good fellow that he was, had already prepared as fine a feast as could possibly be expected out here in the jungle. But I had neither heart nor appetite for food.

That night, sleep was out of the question. I could not help feeling a certain responsibility for the day's happenings. As I lay under the indigo blue of the African sky, the moonlight, like a silvery quivering wand, reflected across the crystal stream a few yards away; the intense quietude, broken only at intervals by the subdued lamentations of the safari. I longed to believe the terrible atrocities of the day a horrible dream from which I would awaken to hear my good Jacobus' greetings of "Coffee, Baas." I made up my mind to go back with my whole safari to the scene of our disaster even at the risk of having to give battle to both of those tribes, for I was determined to pay Jacobus and the boys who had fallen a fitting tribute to their bravery on top of that little mound.

At daybreak we recrossed the river and were again threading our way along the narrow pathway we had cut the previous morning and before long we were again traversing the earthly paradise of bird and plant life which led to the scene of tragedy. Our steps were leaden; the happy songs and laughter of yesterday were stilled; no jokes passed between the boys who marched silently and with muffled footsteps. Mile after mile we went in this fashion, alert only to the possibility of an encounter with our enemies. Well for us all that we did not meet them, for with my boys in their present frame of mind it would have been impossible to have kept them from avenging their fallen comrades

—and I could ill afford to lose any more of my now greatly-diminished safari.

Late in the afternoon we reached the place of our previous day's encounter. Inspection showed that the M'Amogas had returned in our absence and after collecting their dead foes to one side, and taking their spears and knives, had left them to the tender mercies of the jackal and vulture which had already partly devoured them. Instructing some of the boys to bury their remains, I set about selecting a site for our task and, after giving consideration to the incidents of the day before, decided that I would first dig a deep hole right on the brow of the hill which Jacobus had so dearly helped to defend, then, with the rough material to hand, I would build up a mausoleum from which none could steal.

For two days we worked in the broiling sun, first digging, then dragging and pushing rocks as large as our combined forces could move. When all was ready we gathered the remains and reverently laid them in their last resting-place, putting young saplings across them first to prevent crushing when the rocks were wedged into place. I spent another day laboriously cutting their names deep into the trunk of a younger tree which, when finished, was forced into a niche left for the purpose.

On the fourth day we recommenced our journey toward the north-western border of the Congo. The exact position aimed for was north of Morganzulu, between the Makua and Mbumu rivers, about half-way between the western and eastern borders of the Congo. It was there I expected to find traces of the Pygmies. With cries of "Upazi! Upazi!" I pressed the safari on at a rapid pace.

We now entered that remote and, at this time, unknown part of the Congo. We had travelled a thousand miles and more by foot to get here and refused to be discouraged by dangers or hardships. In order to reach our goal we would have to penetrate country teeming with every conceivable species of Central African game; there was also the prospect of encountering further hostile tribes who had possibly never before seen a white man. I expected to cross the River Aruwimi, one of the important tributaries of the Congo River, somewhere eastward near one

of its numerous rapids and a little east of where it receives the Nepoka, which helps swell its volume before flowing into the Congo itself. This would be one of the greatest obstacles to be overcome, for as yet I did not know whether I would find or learn of any crazily-built native suspension bridge spanning the Aruwimi, or whether I would be forced to spend considerable time in building rafts on which to get across. Its tributaries in the higher regions of the mountainous country were legion. The Aruwimi extends westward through the densely-wooded and tangled mass of the untravelled undergrowth of the Belgian Congo until it eventually empties itself into the River Congo near Basoka.

CHAPTER 12.

FOR upwards of three weeks we pushed on, during which time we had penetrated into the most inaccessible part of that wild country and our difficulties were legion. The elephant grass grew high and dense, making quick progress impossible, to say nothing of the danger at every step from reptiles or wild animals. Buffaloes were again in evidence and several times in crossing this uninviting territory we met with accidents and tragic events which further depleted the strength of my safari. By this time we were a very bedraggled and gaunt caravan. My clothing was mostly in ribbons, whilst many of the boys suffered from damaged feet.

On one occasion, when attempting to cross one of the tributaries of the Aruwimi, we had an exciting time. We had built dykes, or one might call them semi-bridges, taking rocks from the river bed and adding gravel and mud to bank up sections of the river. These sectional dams we had reinforced with quantities of papyrus reed and, across the open sections, we had placed trunks of trees, some of which we had dragged from the river, while others we had procured by laboriously hacking them down with our machets.

Our luggage had dwindled down mostly to medicine and ammunition (and even these were very limited), very little food, and a few bundles of precious articles with which to win the goodwill of our Pygmies—if ever found. We had almost completed the task of conveying our camp paraphernalia across the river. A few of the boys were on the other side, stacking and guarding in case of a surprise visit from any buffalo or elephant which might trample or prod our precious belongings into uselessness. The rest of the boys had just returned to the side of the river where I was preparing to collect the few remaining bundles, when Capera screamed in my ear:

"Look, Bwana, look! Upazi, Upazi!"

Looking to where he pointed, a little distance upstream on the other side of the river, I saw several canoes of dugout trees being shoved into the bank fifty yards from where my boys with the supplies were standing. At the instant I looked, several natives from the log boats sent a few light spears at my cowering boys. Seizing my rifle I let fly. Two big fellows dropped. Capera's and N'Oballa's rifles now barked out and another savage went down. This was too much for the attacking natives, who had evidently never before seen or heard a rifle. Consternation and pandemonium ensued; there was a stampede to the log boats, into which they scrambled in utmost disorder and, with terrified cries, they paddled upstream for dear life.

Later, I learned that these natives were a branch of the B'Umbamgos, river pirates who prey upon isolated small villages situated a few miles from the river up and down a long stretch of its navigable length, their method being to float below the village to be attacked, then approach from the inland side by making a long circuitous journey. After pillaging the village and carrying off some of the most comely maidens, they would make off to the boats lying snugly amongst the tall grass a short distance away. Presumably these B'Umbamgos were powerful and numerous, as the villagers seemed to take these depredations quite philosophically and with very little attempt at reprisals. In fact, it seemed they had come to the point of rather expecting these things to happen.

We were now half-way between the last tributary and the Aruwimi itself. The country here being swampy and boggy in places, we often had to retrace our steps, sometimes losing hours in a search for better ground. At times we almost stumbled into lagoons of slimy green water, green as the grass surrounding them and in which nothing but a few repulsive-looking lizards seemed to live. I soon discovered that the soil surrounding these stagnant waters was strongly impregnated with some mineral which turned the banks a brilliant green, shot with bronze. I surmised there must be a copperose lode nearby which accounted for the absence of animal life. Even the birds gave this territory a wide berth.

For three days we struggled through this disagreeable section.

On the evening of the day after leaving the copperose country, when about ten miles from the Aruwimi River, we reached an elevation, from which we caught sight of a native village built on high, sloping ground.

Arriving near the base of this isolated Central African village, we were met by what appeared to be the whole army and their swarthy king or chief. There was no mistaking him. He stood a short distance up from the base of the grassy knoll, his splendid six feet four inches augmented by a plume of magnificent egrets supported from his forehead by what appeared to be a huge ring of ivory. His army in full war regalia of paint, spears, bows, arrows and enormous shields of hide, was drawn up in an imposing array at their Chief's back. I estimated it to number about two thousand men. At their rear the whole population of the village had turned out either to welcome or . . . or what? The question flitted across my mind. As I stood wondering, the giant chief clashed his spear suddenly against his shield, presumably for attention. Instantly a silence settled upon warriors and villagers. A despot, I decided, or else a wonderfully kind man to command such implicit and immediate obedience.

Scrutinizing the old fellow, I concluded he must be kind, for he was now speaking and waving his spear toward his kingdom. Unable to understand a word he was saying, I called my Kikuyu to translate but, before doing so, I went to within fifteen paces of the speaker and, holding my hands high above my head with the palms towards the Chief, told the Kikuyu to state that we were there in peace and friendship and that if the Chief would give his warriors orders to lay down their spears and arrows and remain where they were, I would order my men to lay down their arms. At this, the old man gave a very broad smile and, turning to his commander-in-chief, spoke a few words. The next instant a roar went out from that commander which would have done credit to any regimental sergeant-major. As one man, down went all those black heads. Spears, bows, arrows and shields were neatly laid in rows in front of their owners. Up they stood again and, at another roar, the whole multitude—warriors and villagers alike—squatted on their haunches as quietly as graven images. I went forward with extended hand.

It was evident that the old king did not know anything about shaking hands, but seizing his I shook it warmly, smiling the while. Presently he smiled back and firmly gripped and shook my hand until he had me wincing and squirming. I yelled to the Kikuyu to tell him that our greeting was to shake gently and kindly. On hearing this the great fellow, towering shoulders over me, still grinning, let loose. The Chief now commenced his speech, and while I could not understand his words the speech as interpreted to me by my Kikuyu was as follows:

"I am B'Gomboga," he began, "king of the four tribes of N'Arukamis extending from this, my head village, to the joining waters at Nepoka. I have three sons, all tried and proven warriors, who are chiefs over three tribes which, added to this—the greatest one—form my kingdom.

"We are a peaceful people; we do not cause or make war but we defend our territory and our villages. It was here at the beginning of time that my ancestors drove back a horde of yellow-skinned strangers who came from the far north with a vast army of spearsmen. Since that time our people have enjoyed peace and plenty. We had ceased to eat human flesh before the great spirits gathered up my illustrious father, King N'Komgmba, who ruled before me. Seldom do any warlike tribes penetrate my domain, partly because of the strength of our position and partly because small scattered tribes of my people reach out from here for great distances in every direction. Our only fear is that some day the N'Bambikis and the M'Amogas may join forces and endeavour to overthrow my people. For that reason I have warriors on the lookout day and night. For three days past I have had your safari under observation, whilst from time to time reports have come on your progress which led me to believe you came as friends.

"That is why I welcome you with my army and the people of the N'Arukamis here at our original home—the Hill of Victory. While you are here you will be cared for and safe, but before you are permitted to enter our village in accordance with our ancient custom the oath of the N'Arukamis must be administered, as an assurance of your friendship toward us."

Having finished his long speech, the king watched me closely

as the Kikuyu translated it to me. Thanking him for his welcome, I assured him of my friendship and intimated my willingness to take the oath in compliance with their ancient custom.

Satisfied with my response, B'Gomboga led me towards the brow of the hill on which stood several great boulders of rock. As we drew nearer I observed the king's medicine-men waiting to assist in the ceremony and was glad to see that they appeared friendly, also that there was no such frightful talisman as the one worn by those murderous demons of the Wanandis, the cannibal tribe. On looking around I noticed a gazelle at one end of a large rock and a female goat at the other, both being held by medicine-men. The rock had either been cut away or worn through the ages into a deep scoop. I began to wonder what this was all about, then the old king spoke as if sensing my dilemma: "Fear not, Friend," he said, "no harm will befall you."

At these words one of the medicine-men came forward with a sharp knife upraised. Looking into the man's eyes, I could see that no ill was meant for me and therefore held my ground. The king now stood before me on the other side of the rock with uplifted arm leaning across the scooped-out hollow. The medicine-man raised my right arm in a manner to meet the king's; our hands met and instantly mine was held in a grip which brought tears. Then he—whom I took for the Head Medicine Man—began slowly chanting words which were laboriously translated to me by the Kikuyu: "He, who comes in peace and friendship to the Hill of Victory shall receive more than he gives and be sent on his journey with happiness in his heart and good-will for the N'Arukamis. Do you swear friendship?"

"Yes," I replied, and immediately the word left my mouth the old medicine-man pricked his knife into the fleshy part of my forearm, but only sufficiently deep to cause the blood to flow. The next moment he had repeated the operation on the old king, our blood dripping and mingling in the hollow of the rock. Then came a joyous cry from those gathered around. The medicine-man lifted the gazelle to another rock and, as two assistants held it, slit a vein in its neck, from which he filled a small gourd with its blood; then stepping across to the goat he milked it into the still warm blood. He then handed the gourd to his king who,

after taking a draught of the nauseous concoction, looked at me and said:

"Friend, you are now our brother."

He handed the gourd to me. There was no going back on this job so, with assumed good grace, I swallowed a little.

I now asked permission to select a site for my safari, placing them in a position where none could take them by surprise. The Chief led me towards his council chamber. From this position a wonderful view presented itself. Gently falling away from the village, the slopes of this famous Victory Hill were well cultivated fields of corn, vegetables and fruits, the banana being predominant. Certainly King B'Gomboga knew his business of being "boss," for here was industry and order. A little farther away on the lower lands, and towards the river, were several herds of cattle and, closer in, sheep and goats, all carefully herded by tribesmen. Everyone seemed content, well cared for and happy. This was indeed a land of strange contrasts; a few miles away one could starve or die for the want of water, or perhaps fall victim to the treacherous spear of the N'Bambikis or M'Amogas, be engulfed in a bog, or torn to ribbons by a leopard.

Turning, I smilingly followed my host, who ushered me first into a festively-prepared *bando,* where already a feast had been prepared. I was bidden to sit next to the king. Lined up around the walls of the big *bando* were the king's chiefs and medicine-men. At a signal all squatted on their haunches, excepting the king, who sat on what resembled a huge roughly-hewn chair—his throne. In the centre of the chamber several huge cauldrons, made from the ripe and hardened rind of giant calabashes, were filled with steaming viands, from which the favoured women of the king and chiefs helped all present, emptying a ladle of food out on huge banana leaves. At each serving the gravy from this conglomeration of meat and vegetables dripped down until there was a fair-sized pool of perfectly good gravy in front of each cauldron. Special attention to these greasy puddles was given by the younger daughters who, from time to time, sprinkled handfuls of white sand on them.

After the feast I listened with intense interest to many of the legends of this peaceful tribe.

One legend explained perhaps the king's kindness towards me. It was to the effect that long ago a queen who had ruled over the destinies of the N'Arukamis had died while presenting her husband with an heir to the throne. It so happened that a few days later the child also died—this newly-born babe was probably an Albino. This presumption on my part was deduced from the following reasons: the legend related that the child was extremely fair, with blue eyes and golden hair. On its unexpected demise the father was inconsolable and, in order in some measure to restore him to normalcy, the Head Medicine Man doctored the old King up with the following fable: The medicine man declared that, owing to the fact of his child being fair, with blue eyes, he had been born a king of kings, but on that account, he was too ethereal for this world and had been taken back to the spirit land. He would there watch over the destinies of the N'Arukamis, returning some future day to guide their tribes to victories and conquests of new lands. It was prophesied that this son of a queen long dead would return as a great general skilled in arms and warfare. His mission would be to train the N'Arukamis in defence against all enemies so that none could ever wrest the land of their forefathers from them; their lands would be fruitful; the cattle would wax fat and their wives would become more numerous and more productive. This legend had been handed down for generations until no doubt it had become greatly exaggerated. However, it was their belief that a fair-skinned warrior would some day enter their domain to govern them. Here, then, was the possible reason for so much kindness and reverence being showered upon me.

When I intimated to my kindly host that I must soon be on my way towards the north, where I hoped to find those lost tribes who had mingled with the blacks and become the tiny people he had spoken of, he would not listen and exhorted me to remain among his people where I would some day be king. He was getting old, he said, and the promise had been handed down through the shadows of the spirit land that their future ruler would come as I had come to them. Many evenings we spoke of these things together, until at length I began to break down his belief that I was the expected one, and that I was not of the

spirit world, that I was only here for travel, adventure and hunting; and, although he would sometimes agree, he assured me that I would never be able to make his people believe it.

After remaining contentedly here for several days I decided on a hunting trip and, as I still had a great desire to hunt an okapi, I suggested this to my host. The king, however, discouraged me in this. He assured me that even if I was fortunate enough to catch a fleeting glimpse of the remarkable animal, it would be well-nigh impossible to get an effective shot at one. I felt that I could get near enough and argued so persistently that eventually the king loaned me one of his chiefs and several warriors, ordering them to take me where the okapi was known on rare occasions to come to drink. We remained at this spot for several days without success. We used to creep as silently as snakes through the tall grass; though at times we had experiences with leopards and other big game, never once did we get a glimpse of an okapi.

At last my companions grew tired of this game of patience. They wanted more action or would return to their homes. Our vigil at that dank spot near the little hidden drinking pool for an unlikely visit from an okapi was not to their liking. I realized that if I did not persist in my quest here, the probability of ever getting my okapi would be slight as, once I left the N'Arukamis' village, I would be travelling away from their haunts. I decided that our camp had been sensed by the okapis—if indeed, they were anywhere near. Therefore, I requested the N'Arukamis to return to their village, leaving me with only N'Oballa and a few of my own boys. At this they demurred, but when finally I persuaded them, off they trotted back to their Hill of Victory.

I now shifted the location of our camp several miles to where it was more densely covered by undergrowth; in fact, we were really within the forest and at least seven miles from the drinking pool. Here we were entertained, morning, noon and night, by the chattering of monkeys, the everlasting screeching of parrots, and the stealthy creeping of the leopard. We had but a short, half-mile to go for all the gazelle we needed. Bananas and other tropical fruit grew in abundance. I saw many strange and, to me, new plants and creepers. One peculiar tree, the name of which

I did not know, had a strange fascination for me. Whenever I saw it, either by day or night, its leaves appeared to have been taken freshly dripping from a pot of red paint. I always felt when passing near these trees that if I brushed against them I would be smeared with their blood-like colour.

Each morning before the day had fully sprung into life I travelled towards my pool, never taking more than two boys along. We had by this time become expert woodsmen. Never a sound did we make on our early trip, the same silence being exercised on our return. During these days of patient watching my food consisted of dried venison and fruit. On the evening of the third day after the N'Arukamis had left, we had started our return to camp and had gone but a short distance when one of the boys whispered that he thought he had heard a rustling from the direction of the pool. Back we glided silently as the shadows, peering through peep-holes in the bushes, but were disappointed at seeing nothing more interesting than a leopard drinking. I began to think I would never get my okapi, but what a chance I missed, for the very next morning we saw the unmistakable spoor of the okapi itself. In fact, there had been two down at the pool during the night—probably a male and a female. My zeal became even keener. I started eagerly and earlier than ever the following day.

It was quite dark when we set out, but I had travelled that path so often that I knew every inch of the way and, just as the grey of the new day was visible, I crouched down at my favourite spot with eyes expectantly glued to my peep-holes, rifle poised in the fork of the bush, all ready should the elusive animal appear. Ten minutes lengthened into an hour. My neck was beginning to feel the strain; my eyes smarted with the staring, while the knee on which I was kneeling and the doubled-up big toe of my other foot were causing me excruciating pain, then, suddenly, without the slightest warning, the okapi appeared!

Standing in the direct line of my lookout, on the opposite side of the little pool, was a wonderful specimen of the male okapi. The early morning sun at my back gave an excellent light; I was able to feast my eyes on the strange creature. He stood sniffing the air as if suspicious of some unseen enemy but, as the

moments passed and the silence was unbroken, he commenced to drink. I began to reason with myself: "Why don't you shoot? You cannot miss!" I did not shoot, but instead became more interested in studying the peculiar markings and colourings of this animal which, in many respects, resembles the giraffe and the zebra.

Standing about five feet at the withers, somewhat after the build of a zebra, with short thick neck but a giraffe-like head, a short, tufted, chestnut-coloured tail, cheek and jowls of a yellowish white in contrast to its dark-coloured neck, shoulders and body ranged in colour from sepia and jet black to vinous red, the belly black; across the forehead and down the muzzle it had a line of deep red chestnut with broad ears of the same colour; the hind legs and hind quarters, as also the forelegs, were snowy white with touches of orange and plainly marked with horizontal lines of purplish black.

As I gazed in wonderment at this strange and beautiful animal the realization dawned upon me of the ruthlessness of my quest. Here was an animal harmless to men, unique in species and possibly almost extinct; yet I had deliberately come out to this spot day after day for nearly two weeks with one thought in my mind—that of getting my first okapi. I began to realize the ruthless cruelty of men who would deliberately plan to kill an animal which had no value for food consumption, excepting in very urgent cases of starvation, just for the sake of killing and later boasting of their skill against an animal with no defence. No, I decided, I could not shoot that animal as he stood there drinking. I had had my view; I had seen this beautiful and strangest of animals. Presently, lifting his head, he looked timidly from side to side as if for an assurance of security, and I felt thankful that this understanding had reached me in time to prevent such unwarranted slaughter. Remaining as silent as the still little pool itself, I saw that animal unafraid prick up its broad ears as if listening to the distant whinny of its mate, and then swiftly glide into the dense grass, lost to me forever.

And that is how I "got" my first (and last) okapi!

CHAPTER 13.

WHEN I made known to the king of the N'Arukamis my determination to move on, he ordered his people to do everything possible to further my plans. Dried *billtong*, crushed rice and dates were prepared for us. When I broached the question of the difficulties of crossing the Aruwimi River the king offered to carry us over in his warships. I was invited to go on a trip of inspection to this fleet and thereupon several chiefs and about fifty warriors accompanied me. We made a gala day of this visit to their river fleet for, although it would hardly impress a European power, it was, nevertheless, a decidedly useful flotilla for a Central African potentate. Its principal use was to impress his hostile neighbours and to cross the river when visiting other parts of his domain. There were always several of his warships cruising on the river with skilled spearsmen whose sole duty was to keep the whole village supplied with fish. I had it from the king himself that the boats thus employed were never more than half an hour's paddling from their base.

Situated at the bend of the river was a cove, or small bay, running inland about an eighth of a mile, possibly formed at some earlier period by the swirling waters gradually eating away the softer parts of the bank. In this tiny inlet lay anchored the fleet of King B'Gomboga.

On arriving at the river I was totally unprepared for the scene which burst upon my vision. It was an amazing sight—not so much the destructive powers of the war vessels, as the men who manned them. My native friends had undoubtedly put one over on me. Unknown to myself, they had planned an elaborate reception. The shores of the inlet were lined with warriors gaily decked out in full war regalia, and at their rear, at a distance of possibly fifty paces, stood tier upon tier of children. Then came the old men and lastly the women of the whole village, all

decked out in their gayest of abbreviated attire, whilst the warships were literally smothered with garlands of flowers and creepers. As soon as I was seen, a signal was given and, like the movement of one man, up went the spears, then down they came with a deafening crash against their shields, whilst at the same time a thunderous roar of welcome went up from every throat in the concourse.

Turning to the Kikuyu, I told him to ask my escort the reason for all this show. His reply was that the king was exceedingly proud of his fleet and well drilled warriors and merely wanted to give an exhibition of his naval and military strength. My reply to the king's welcome waxed eloquent. I especially dealt long and generously on the unmistakable impregnability of his kingdom.

His ships—well, they floated all right, but to give them the misnomer of "fighting craft" was indeed the highest form of egotistical exaggeration, for the fleet consisted of huge hand-hewn hollowed-out logs, each barely capable of carrying a crew of a dozen warriors. These canoes—if such they could be named—somewhat resembled the famous war canoes of the Maoris, the difference being that the latter are seaworthy and capable of travelling thousands of miles across oceans carrying huge war provisions besides a crew and warriors of one hundred per canoe, whereas these African river canoes, which can easily be overturned, were crude and serviceable only on the smoothest water. I gratefully observed, however, that they were quite capable of carrying my safari, camp paraphernalia, food supplies and ammunition across the river.

Three days later we were again on the banks of the Aruwimi River, ready to embark on another leg of our journey. I was indeed grateful and deeply moved at the friendly attentions of the N'Arukamis, with their loads of gifts in the shape of food from the king and his councillors who, with his army and famous fleet, to say nothing of all the villagers, were down at the river to wave farewell and wish me a safe return.

As soon as the safari was loaded up on the opposite bank of the Aruwimi we set our course towards the north-west, the direction which would eventually lead us, I hoped, to the east of

Morganzulu, and from thence, by travelling in a more northerly direction, we would ultimately reach the Makua River. I hoped in this way to avoid crossing several tributaries and that this direction would eventually bring us a little closer to that part of the country on the opposite side of the Makua which I desired to reach. Judging mostly from hearsay, I would then be somewhere within a hundred miles or so of the territory of my supposed Pygmy tribe. The old King B'Gomboga and his medicine-men had exhausted all their eloquence trying to dissuade me from what they termed the equivalent of a "fool's journey."

The following two days we made fairly fast progress, but from then on we were compelled to slow down, until eventually advance was made only by cleaving our way through virgin country. It was so entangled with vines and undergrowth as to make passage all but impossible. More than half of each day was spent in cutting pathways through this impenetrable virgin mass; perils lurked at every step whilst, coupled with the danger of animals and snakes, there was the persistent thought of the unfriendly tribes which this part was supposed to harbour and the fear that they might pounce upon us unawares. Never a day passed that we did not have to cross a stream or two and pass over and around treacherous boggy country. Occasionally we would reach an elevation from which we could see for miles ahead and always there was that same dense vegetation. Eventually we reached within a half-day's journey of the edge of the great forest through a portion of which we would have to pass.

During the forenoon of the day prior to reaching the Itura, one of my boys slipped on some dank vegetation and lay with his load all sprawling ahead a few paces, face half-buried in slime and his hands and arms covered almost to his elbows in the greenish-looking slosh. As he lifted his face in mute appeal for help, his expression changed instantly to a look of horror and, gazing in the same direction, I saw an immense wild hog just springing into its lightning-like charge toward the head of the boy.

There was no time for him to leap out of the way; if those wicked-looking curved tusks caught him they would rip him open as if with a razor. Bang! bang! went both barrels of my rifle. Impossible to miss the mark at such close range, yet that

hog had worked up such incredible speed in the short time elapsing between when I first saw it and my shots that its impetus carried it with a sickening thud against the head of the unfortunate boy. Rushing to him, expecting to find him with a crushed skull, I was surprised to see him open his eyes, look around intelligently, sit upright, and rub his head from which blood was streaming. Mumbling some incoherent words, he got up, walked across to the hog and kicked it viciously, saying at the same time, so the Kikuyu told me: "Yah, so you got your desserts; thought your head was harder than mine, but see what mine has done to you. Ha, ha!"

The poor dumb numbskull had thought his head had killed that hog until he was enlightened later by the other boys!

The next day we entered the south-western edge of the forest. Here we proceeded even more cautiously as, on the evening preceding, we had found freshly-made spoor of natives around a little watering hole and the remains of a carnivorous feast. Whoever they might be, caution and preparedness must be the order of the day. A narrow pathway leading much in the direction we wanted to travel was discovered by N'Oballa. Inspection showed it had not been traversed for a very long time as vines and bush were trailing here and there across it. I sent two of my best trackers well ahead with strict orders to preserve the utmost silence and to travel without so much as moving a twig.

The first of these two trackers was about one hundred yards in our lead, the second one-half that distance; and in this position the whole safari plodded along mile after mile, until about two in the afternoon when, in a very dark part of the forest, the second boy rushed back gasping out the alarming news that the first boy had been silently speared.

With fear-filled eyes and faltering words, he explained that the boy in the lead had just given warning that he had caught sight of lurking figures flitting ahead on either side of our pathway. Barely had he given the warning when a spear zipped through the air transfixing him. What a dilemma! To be caught in this narrow pathway in semi-darkness would be about the worst thing that could happen.

Taking Capera with me, I hurried to the lead, ordering the

others to follow at intervals of about five yards. In this order I led the way to where the fallen boy was lying. Posting Capera with rifles ready to fire in the direction from which the slightest noise should come and from where evil eyes were doubtless watching our every movement, I stooped over the boy. He was past human aid. Summing up the situation, I decided that if we continued along the path there was the possibility of us all being picked off one by one. Evidently these savages did not know what firearms were and, on this assumption, I felt justified in resorting to my own particular method of reprisal.

Distributing the boys for a distance of about two hundred yards on either side of the narrow path, I bade each select the nearest densely-foliaged tree and silently climb into its lowest branches, keeping themselves well hidden. Before doing so, however, all of our camp paraphernalia was slung into two big heaps as if hastily discarded. I posted Capera half-way down our line of tree defence, with N'Oballa about in the centre, then, climbing a tree directly opposite to where the boy had been killed, I awaited events.

Minutes dragged into half an hour. Then suddenly I heard the call of the crested night owl. Momentarily I was deceived into thinking it was a genuine call, but almost instantly I remembered this was not the time of day for owls to be calling their mates. Presently away on our right front I caught the answer; this was followed by a deep silence, then again two calls from opposite directions. Another ominous silence, then the sound of rustling, very faint at first, but gradually increasing until it came from all directions. This was followed by bodies moving stealthily through the underbrush.

No word was spoken. Tensely we waited. On and on they came, as adroit in their jungle-craft as the dreaded leopard itself. One by one they came leaping on to the trail. Twenty or more there must have been; fierce-looking savages followed by a ferocious, gross, malevolent-looking creature, obviously their chief, and unquestionably the most repulsive native I had so far seen. As he came closer to my hiding place I could see that he was definitely cross-eyed, a thing very rare in natives and, as though to put a finishing touch to his ensemble of hideousness, a third foot much

smaller than either of his other two grew from out the side of his left instep.

Though the temptation was strong I hesitated through an innate sense of fair play to slaughter even a fiend such as this in cold blood, so withheld my trigger finger. This decision, however, was at that very instant taken from my hands by one of the boys along the line of trees who, in his anxiety to get a thrust at one of his enemies, over-reached. Slipping from his perch, he hung on to a branch to save himself from falling. There he dangled by one hand, a marvellous target for those spearmen.

For a split second their astonishment paralysed action, then several spears were poised for flight. Bang! went Capera's and N'Oballa's rifles, followed by every boy of the safari sending his spear on its flight of deadly intent.

Fear and pandemonium instantly ensued amongst those jungle rats, several of whom, including their chief, were already lying almost at my feet. The remainder, seeking safety in instant flight, were quickly swallowed up in the fastnesses of the forest.

The whole personnel of the safari now came bounding down from their tree hide-outs and, before I could utter a word of protest, had set upon their fallen enemies, piercing them through and through with their spears.

They then contemptuously threw the bodies into a heap, dancing round and round them, gloating triumphantly.

When at last their demoniacal fury had subsided, more from emotional exhaustion than any other reason, I was able to persuade them to some sense of order. Neither by eloquence, promises nor threats, however, could I persuade them to bury the bodies of their enemies.

No need now for the swish of the sjambok or Capera's cry of "Upazi! Enunda Upazi!" to urge the safari on. All were now more than eager to find a clearing where we could safely pitch camp for the night, as the shadows were already beginning to deepen the gloom of this great jungle.

Towards five o'clock we reached a fairly large clearing, beside which I decided to camp for the night. The possibility of emerging that night from the dark shadows and eternal gloom of this prison-like place was so remote that I felt it was better to prepare

than be sorry. With these thoughts in mind I immediately set the whole safari to building a very strong thorn-bush barricade all around our camping place and, before closing the entrance for the night, had them bring in huge piles of wood with which to keep the fires burning all night long. For water we had to be content with what remained in our water bottles; as for food, well, we had plenty, having as yet consumed very little of what the N'Arukamis had supplied.

Very early next morning, when I had just dozed off into my first slumber, I was aroused to full consciousness by a terrific commotion. Sitting up and rubbing my eyes I saw an immense gorilla shambling off into the forest at the other side of our clearing. Blood was dripping from several gashes in different parts of its body. It was evident that the end of some deadly combat had aroused me. Arousing the boys to some activity, since it was now as fully day as ever it would be in this place, I determined to find out just what the gorilla had been sparring with. Taking my Kikuyu and rifle, and holding my machet ready for any possible close work, I went cautiously over in the direction from whence the gorilla had come. Going a short distance to where grass was trodden down I found what I sought. There, lying in a crumpled heap, was a huge leopard, dead. On lifting its head I saw that its neck and back were broken, and there was an awful gash at the side of its throat. In the claws of both fore-feet it still held bunches of fur and flesh ripped from the flanks of the gorilla. Hurrying back to our little *bomba*, we ate a frugal breakfast and started off as if demons were at our backs.

During the rest of our journey through the forest I was fortunate in getting a most remarkable close-up view of a huge herd of bull elephants and their cows threading their way towards the centre of this forest, which has a breadth of some two hundred miles. So intent were they on their journey and so quiet were we that they passed within twenty paces without knowing of our presence. It was a most wonderful opportunity of bagging elephants, but I let them pass without molestation. There were two immense ancients in the lead whose tusks must have been at least fifty to sixty inches long and of enormous thickness. The

height and volume of those two leaders seemed incredible. What their age was I can only conjecture. The ear of the largest one must have been nearly four feet across and looked like an umbrella fully open; the tramp of their feet shook the earth like a miniature earthquake and for quite a time after they had passed we could still feel the vibration.

By four o'clock I noticed it was getting lighter; in another half-hour we had emerged into open country beyond the western and northern boundary of the great Itura, a very microscopic portion of which we had just passed through.

We could now see beautiful undulating plains and valleys with an occasional range of low-lying mountains beyond. Alas! After proceeding a short distance I discovered that merely looking at the country-side does not give one a very accurate idea of its true nature as, within a quarter of a mile from the forest from which we had just emerged, we were compelled to retrace our footsteps. The ground at each succeeding step was getting more and more soggy; the elephant grass was taller and thicker than any so far encountered and, what was worse still, the nomadic tribes supposed to inhabit these parts were reputed to have the nasty habit of blowing poisoned darts, or arrows, into one, without a sound to betray their presence. We had made a long journey this day and, therefore, I decided to remain on the high ground a little distance from the edge of the forest for the night.

The next morning, taking half my boys, I skirted along the rim of what may best be described as an extinct crater crammed with every conceivable form of plant life, so thickly matted together that it had the appearance of a closely-woven green carpet, though on closer inspection the growth was in places many feet high and camouflaged a sodden and boggy-like foundation. The rim of this crater led us away towards the south. We went on for upwards of two hours; then quite unexpectedly we almost stumbled over a family of apes. They had evidently been holding a conference and were just as startled as we were. An animated chattering commenced and all scampered off towards our rear, but slightly to our right, at an angle of forty-five degrees, or in a V-shaped direction, from the trail we had traversed. On inspection, I found a small and little used track which led

over the lip of the crater down into the inside for a little way, where it met another much broader trail which emerged from under the lip—probably twenty feet below. This was the pathway we had seen from our camp-site, as it started climbing along and up the inside of the crater-like formation itself. Had it not been for the chance encounter with those apes it might have taken us an indefinite time to find a path across that country.

Hastening back to camp, we very soon had the whole safari once more on the tramp into the unknown. As we proceeded—although visibility was somewhat retarded by the rim of the crater—I could see that the land toward the north-west was more elevated and appeared on the far horizon like a hazy formation of mountains. If such proved to be the case, then those must be the mountains which my old friend, the King of the N'Arukamis, had called the "Impassable Barrier," isolating the legendary Pygmies from the outside world. I felt elated for, although as yet a great distance off, it was very gratifying to know that if that was really the barrier spoken of, we had journeyed on a fairly accurate course. Hardships and privations would be forgotten at the thrill of being the first white traveller to reach this unknown land—at least from the direction from which we had come.

With cheery words of encouragement and promises of an extra allowance of snuff and an extra day's pay, and cries of "Upazi!" from the *saidi,* the safari pushed on. By sundown we passed over the rim and had our first look at the country below and beyond towards the north-west. Being now so near sundown, I selected a site on the slope from which we had a panoramic view of the whole country and bade the boys make camp here for the night.

Soon after darkness had fallen, I noticed a long way off to the north what I took to be lights of several camp fires. Whether friendly people or otherwise, I decided for this night at least they would remain unknown. Apart from giving an extra word of caution to the watchers, I did not seriously bother about the incident, and as it turned out we were not molested.

The following day I decided that as those fires were right in the direction we must pass I would send my best and most silent scout well ahead of the safari, as I did not intend losing any more

of my boys to the treacherous spears of hidden savages. Added to the discomfiture of the terrific heat, the humidity was excessively heavy. About noon the scout came bounding back with the news that we were within half an hour's march of a village whose campfires we had seen the night before. I inquired if he had learnt to what tribe they belonged and whether their customs were friendly or otherwise. He admitted his ignorance on these points, but judged they were peaceful, appearing to be agriculturalists, as he had seen considerable portions of land around and near their settlement under cultivation. Being much in need of cereals for the boys and having a great craving for fresh vegetables myself, I hoped to be able to do a little bartering, so on we marched.

Nearing the village we were met by one who appeared to be the Chief, or Headman, accompanied by a medicine-man. Like ourselves, they had evidently sent out runners and had been warned of our approach. This native dignitary now standing before us would have created a furore in a comedy theatre back in one of our great cities. On his right cheek, extending from the tip of his nose to the back of his neck, the head of a snake was painted. Whenever the wearer of this academic painting opened his mouth, in speech or otherwise, it gave the impression that the serpent was very much alive. The colourings were exceptionally good, proving that these primitive people had knowledge of compounding the various herbs and minerals. On the left side of his face a vulture was painted, its beak being represented by the Chief's own olfactory organ while, to enhance the realistic effect, he had cleverly arranged vulture feathers as a headdress for that side of his head. The whole of his body, including his legs and feet, were painted in weird grotesqueness. From the Chief to the medicine-men, down the line to the humblest villager, all were painted with more or less skill.

Before taking too much for granted, I thought it best to impress upon these savages that we were prepared for emergencies and possessed a power of which they had never dreamed. Taking my rifle I pointed at a bunch of wild bananas growing on a tree at some distance and let fly. Down flopped the bunch; also most of the natives. They went down on their knees with faces

touching the ground—all excepting the Chief and one old medicine-man. The report alone crashing through the silence must have filled them with fear.

The Chief, whose age it would have been hard to guess under his coat of pictures, managed to control his fear at least to the extent of keeping his upright position. Stepping forward, I held my hand above my head with the palm toward him. I bade my Kikuyu tell him I was his friend and merely required the bare requirements of needy travellers. The Kikuyu tried and tried again in all the dialects at his command but could make no headway. It was evident that we were at last checkmated so far as the translation of their language went. The only word or meaning which could be understood between us at present was the fact that we were friends and would harm none. As soon as this fact was established the villagers were bent on proving their side of the contract of friendship between us by relieving the whole safari of its load. We were then led off to a secluded spot shadowed by trees near a bubbling brook, where I soothed my tired and blistered feet. Food was brought to us, consisting mostly of fruit and vegetables, but there was also some fish which had been grilled whole over wood fires.

During my brief stay with these people I found them a very peaceful tribe. Possibly their hideous decorations were made in the belief that they would scare off enemies; but as I pondered the reason for their mildness it dawned on me that owing to their isolation, caused by the inaccessibility of their domain, these crude, naked people, with no more advancement than their cannibal brothers or warlike neighbours, were gentle and kindly simply because they did not have to fear by both day and night the invasion of their territory by others more ruthless than themselves.

I sent boys out in different directions to the nearby villages to obtain as many cured or uncured hides of the kongonia as possible. I especially wanted kongonia hides, chiefly because of their light weight and unusual toughness, having an idea which, if feasible, would possibly prove invaluable to us during the next few weeks of travel; in any case, I intended putting my theory into practice.

Towards the middle of the afternoon the safari boys, in twos

and threes, straggled back to camp, carrying one or more hides. With them came natives from various villages also carrying hides. By the time most of the boys had returned, even with many rejected as unfit, there was an ample supply of hides left for the experiment.

For the next few days everyone in the safari was energetically engaged in curing and fashioning kongonia-hide cuirasses. First the hides were trimmed, then well soaked for a few days, after which, to further soften them up for pliability, the very life was pounded out of them by big round stones, plus the boys' muscular elbow-grease. Meanwhile, another group was laboriously hewing a few logs into the crude semblance of men's torsos, over which, when all was ready, the well-soaked and now quite pliable hides were stretched and pegged down to dry hard in the fierce heat of the sun.

We never advanced very far in conversational matters, although we did manage to learn the name of the tribe according to sound. The Chief's name was N'Sogomba and his tribe was known as the N'Almalabes. From N'Sogomba I learnt through signs much of the topography of the surrounding country, but whenever I tried to learn of the country towards the north-west, in the direction of what I thought was the dimly-seen mountain barrier, he always endeavoured to induce me to journey south instead of north-west, giving as his reason that the country was impassable in that direction. He explained also that there were lawless and warlike tribes in the country between here and the River Makua, which was a very long distance off, and beyond which were the supposed mountains we must pass to reach the Pygmies' land. His efforts to induce me to forego my desire were so persistent and vehement that in the end I was persuaded to take the direction he pointed out.

On the morning of the third day, off we started, loaded down with gifts of food and little quaint articles of native craftsmanship, which were to ensure us against all evils. The kindly Chief N'Sogomba appointed an escort, fifty of his picked warriors, to act as carriers for the first half-day's march, after which they were to return to their homes. With much gratitude I bade farewell to the tiny village and its Chief and, later, to his fifty warriors.

It was not very long before I had good cause for believing that Chief N'Sogomba had special reasons for sending his warriors with me on that day, as I found we had been led a great distance from our route. Possibly he had my safety genuinely at heart and imagined it would really be impossible for us to make our way through this treacherous country.

Now came long, tiresome days of sweltering humid heat, where flies and mosquitoes were myriad. Our path led us through areas of ever-thickening elephant grass. In many places it was over eleven feet high and occasionally reached the incredible height of fourteen feet. In such places we were at the worst possible disadvantage. Every step was taken warily; snakes were numerous and on one occasion we had a miraculous escape from being trampled by an infuriated bull rhinoceros which had been bitten on its nozzle by a serpent. The serpent was still clinging to it as it stampeded, tearing its way through grass and over young saplings, never for an instant swerving in its mad rush. The southern bank of the River Makua was eventually reached; we could now see dimly, as I then thought, the mountains lying some fifty miles or more beyond the northern bank of this river.

Here I set the whole safari to work building a fort-like structure with young trees which we laboriously hewed down, lashing them together with lengths of strong vines growing in abundance close along the river banks. I intended resting the whole safari here for a few days before entering on the last stage of our long trek. As yet I had found no means of crossing the river, since it was too wide and deep for a dam such as we had made in smaller streams. Game, wild fruit, berries and nuts grew in profusion, so that we did not need to worry over food supplies. My chief concern was whether we would come in contact with hostile natives. This thought induced me to build my crude three-housed miniature village, hidden well from view amid equatorial trees and underbrush. We soon discovered that the river held fish in abundance, and almost at our door were gazelle and impali. Had it not been for the unbearable heat and humidity this would have been one of our choicest camps.

Next morning I was aroused by Capera shaking me, his voice slowly penetrating my sleep-befogged brain with the startling news,

which awakened me instantly, that we had neighbours. Sitting up, I listened as he related how two of our boys had set out very early to hunt game for the camp's requirements. They had gone downstream, that is to say, towards the west, and when at a distance of about a mile from camp, had seen a kind of rough log-like canoe being manoeuvred across the river a short distance from where they were then standing. The two had returned with all speed to report. Then Capera, accompanied by N'Oballa, had gone to investigate whilst I was still sleeping. Passing the spot pointed out by the boy who had seen the boat, they had cautiously pushed through the thicker grass and discovered several well-worn paths leading both to and from the water in different directions but all leading in a more or less circuitous way towards the south-west.

Following one of these paths he presently reached a position from where, at a short distance away, he could see a neatly-planned, large-sized village on the slopes of a hill, it being, he thought, about three miles from where we were now camping.

Before going out to discover whether these neighbours were friends or otherwise, I intended for once to have a really good breakfast.

CHAPTER 14.

DIRECTLY after breakfast Capera and I started off. Scouting around the outskirts of the strange village, I soon discovered that these people were unlike any we had met so far. For a long time I sat hidden in the branches of a tree, inspecting the village and its inhabitants through my glasses. They appeared peaceful and industrious. A peculiarity of this territory so near the equator was the fact that quite a few of both sexes had comparatively fair skins. There was no mistaking the fact that they were of the Azande type and probably spoke the Sudanese language. From the number of wood carvings distributed around the village in front of each *bando,* I concluded that their religious leanings were toward fetishism.

Having satisfied myself that they were unlikely to cause us trouble I returned to camp. Gathering two-thirds of my safari around me with full fighting preparedness, and selecting a few tawdry gifts, I again started out—this time with the object of pushing right into the village. Silently as shadows we entered the village and had actually begun marching up Main Street before the inhabitants realized that strangers were in their midst. Immediately we were discovered a terrific commotion ensued. Women with their nude children scampered like frightened rabbits for their burrows; the men also appeared loth to meet us and, instead, crept into their *bandos,* where they peered furtively around the opening at us. Calling my Kikuyu to join me, I walked towards the largest *bando.* As we neared it, a tall and rather young woman emerged from the entrance. Her appearance was startling; she carried herself with regal grace and might easily have been mistaken for an Egyptian Princess instead of being, as I later learned, queen of this isolated African tribe. Her skin was too fair for a negress, and reminded me of that pleasing shade of light brown with its incomparable smoothness and fineness of texture which is more or less typical of the Afrikander types of

Cape Town. Her costume consisted of a wide ornamental belt from which hung, back and front, strings of bright vari-coloured seeds, the breadth of one's palm. This, coupled with a beautiful egret feather headdress and more loops of seeds around her neck, was the sum total of her dress.

Behind her came several venerable-looking men, each carrying some peculiar-looking stick or object which, no doubt, was the insignia of his particular office.

Stopping at about ten paces from me, the woman spoke in a tongue which the Kikuyu could not understand. As soon as she understood our quandary she spoke a few words to one of her courtiers, who trotted off to the far end of the village, returning shortly at a much slower pace with what appeared to be a very old Negro, bent almost double, leaning on his arm. As he came nearer I found that my conjecture of an aged Negro was far from correct, for this old fellow, looking up from sunken eyes, showed an unmistakable resemblance to the Arabs found around Port Said, particularly those near Koweit, who have strong Semitic features. His queen spoke to him in the same language in which she had addressed me. He listened attentively with an occasional glance our way.

When she had finished, he commenced speaking to me slowly in a dialect of which I understood only a few words here and there, but the Kikuyu immediately grasped the gist of his talk and translated to me, explaining that we were in the territory of the N'el-Kasombas, who were ruled by Queen N'Ilepian, before whom I had the honour of standing. Although their land had heretofore never been invaded by men of white skin and blue eyes, Queen N'Ilepian nevertheless wished to welcome me if I had come in peace, but if not, she requested that I depart from her territory immediately. Replying through the Kikuyu, I bade him thank the Queen for her welcome and told him in as few words as possible that my mission was that of a traveller only, but that I wished to rest here for a few days before proceeding.

This the old fellow translated to the Queen. When he had finished his recitation she looked at me steadfastly in a most disconcerting manner for a few moments; then told her chancellor to say that she welcomed the stranger to her domain and that she

would order a place to be prepared for me and the boys. This I apologetically declined, explaining that I had already prepared a *bomba* for myself and the boys but that I would feel honoured if she would permit me to return and pay my respects later in the day. To this she acquiesced by inviting me for the evening meal. Calling the boy who carried the bundle of gifts, I spread them out on the ground before her. There were some cheap, gaudily-coloured silk scarfs large enough to wrap around her body, a gilt mirror, and many inexpensive articles which might have cost a million dollars from the way these savages fondled them with surprise and joy. The mirror caused the greatest excitement of all. The Queen and her women retainers could not overcome their joy at this bauble. I left them excited, happy and filled with wonderment.

That evening proved to be a very interesting one. My hostess entertained me in a royal manner; in fact her efforts to please me were most embarrassing. My early upbringing was possibly too Puritanical to permit me to feel comfortable at the too close proximity of a practically nude and very lovely woman.

Luxuriant leopard and okapi skins covered the floor and draped the walls of her *bando*. Flowers were in profusion, looped around the eaves of the hut, as were also many bunches of bananas and other fruit.

Her attire now consisted of a headdress of okapi skins and egret feathers. On her left arm above the elbow was an armlet of remarkable workmanship and decidedly foreign to Central African native craftsmanship. Later, when examining this jewellery, J judged it to be of great antiquity. It was wrought from one piece of solid gold and thickly encrusted with semi-precious stones. On enquiring about its origin I could get no satisfactory explanation of how it came to this part of the country, but I did ascertain that it had been worn by her mother and mother's mother.

Later, at a sign from N'Ilepian, her guests, excepting the ancient interpreter, myself and my Kikuyu, made their obeisance and departed. From the Ancient One I learnt that they were an offshoot of the people who had migrated ages ago in one huge migration from the far north. Their traditions, as handed down

for generations, taught these people that they were of an ancient civilization and that, owing to a great disaster, they had been forced from their native country. This probably explained the fairness of their skins, their Semitic features and their language.

The Ancient One was now ready to depart for the night. I, too, remembered duties to perform with my safari and, therefore, thanking this beautiful and gracious Queen of the N'el-Kasombas for her hospitality, and assuring her I would return next day, I bade her good-night and departed for my own *bomba*.

I slept very soundly that night and it seemed but a few moments later that I was awakened by Capera. Sitting up, I discovered it was broad daylight. He was saying something about the old men. "What old men?" I asked, and he explained that several of Queen N'Ilepian's chiefs had arrived half an hour earlier with the request that I return with them as their Queen had ordered them to bring me to her for feastings and dancings. I told them to go back and tell their Queen that I would go to her village with my Kikuyu later in the day, but that it was not convenient for me to leave now. At this they manifested grave concern, but perceiving I was determined, returned to their Queen with my message. In the afternoon I strolled over to the village and was met by the Ancient and two of his cronies, all of whom silently and unsmilingly followed in my wake towards the Queen's *bando*. The dining hall and council hall were separated by a double partition of stout saplings covered with a fibrous material which here took the place of plaster. The three shrivelled-up ancients made a grand obeisance to me as if receiving some great dignitary, bidding me follow to where the Queen awaited me.

Queen N'Ilepian may have been awaiting me but she certainly did not show any hurry to greet me on this occasion. The four of us sat silently and seemingly unnoticed within the council chamber, whilst the Kikuyu tried to make himself understood by the village maidens outside, of whom there seemed to be many in excess of the male population. In supreme silence we sat for upwards of half an hour; not a word was spoken; none of the ancients could make me understand and, out of respect to me, would not converse amongst themselves. The atmosphere was stiflingly hot. The earthen floor exuded heat and dampness, and

when an ugly-looking spider dropped from the roof to my bare arm, my endurance snapped. Leaping to my feet, I called to my Kikuyu, ordering him to explain to the old men that my patience had worn out; I refused to wait any longer; that if the Queen wanted to see me she could come to my *bomba*. At this outburst the old fellows were terribly agitated and frantically exhorted the Kikuyu to bid me keep quiet, but I had a feeling that the Queen, in her woman's way, was paying me back for not obeying her mandate to accompany the elders back that morning. I was furious at the thought of a Central African native, even though a queen, daring to make a fool of me and I said so in very fluent English.

Doubtless it was well for me that I was unable to say those things in her own tongue for, in the midst of my ravings, sensing her presence, I turned and, looking towards the entrance of her private quarters, saw her.

There she stood in all her barbaric splendour. As she advanced with queenly grace and dignity my anger vanished. I felt ashamed of some of the things I had said and thought but, after our greetings were finished, my thoughts returned to that long wait and I determined to find out whether she really had purposely kept me waiting. I told the Kikuyu to question her point-blank. However, as he in turn had to pass the conversation through the Ancient One, my inquisitiveness was never gratified. The good old fellow replied to the Kikuyu that he dare not repeat my question as it would be more than his life was worth to anger his Queen. He advised that I humour, rather than anger her. He promised to be my friend and to give me advice and warning when necessary. Then turning to the Queen, he probably discussed some subject which he had fabricated in his own mind in lieu of what I wanted him to translate. Evidently satisfied with what he had told her, she had him explain to me that in my honour she had planned a great feast that night and had sent out orders to her tribesmen and chiefs in the surrounding districts to attend. There were to be sham battles between her picked warriors, dancing by her maidens, and her fetish men were to perform mysterious rites before the God of their forefathers. I inquired of the Ancient One who and what was their god. He

replied cryptically: "It is the same now as then, but wait, my son, and thou shalt see what none but our tribesmen have ever before witnessed."

Queen N'Ilepian now invited me to sit beside her on the okapi robe, the three ancients preparing to leave. Calling my Ancient One, I asked him to remain with me. He replied that I was quite safe: "But, my son," he added solemnly, "be warned, and even if your heart rebels, be patient and honour this good but wilful and beautiful woman of our tribe; she is adored by all and the lifting of her finger could bring instant death upon you. Be wise and careful. I will be near should you want me. Pay heed to my words of wisdom, my son."

Having uttered these words of warning, he passed out of the *bando*.

N'Ilepian and I were now left alone save for the Kikuyu. N'Ilepian, obviously ignorant of western propriety, immediately pointed to the doorway, then at the Kikuyu. There was no mistaking her meaning. I promptly pointed to my mouth, then at the Kikuyu, attempting to make her understand that I wished him to stay to translate, but she was not to be baulked. Clapping her hands in summons of one of her serving-women who appeared from the inside chamber, she ordered her to take the Kikuyu outside the *bando*.

This accomplished, N'Ilepian sat beside me and opened a native-made box of ebony of peculiar construction from which she took a small portion of whitish-grey paste about as large as a Barcelona nut. Around this she wrapped a green leaf which she placed in her mouth to chew. The continuous chewing caused a red saliva to form which dyed the gums and tongue a vivid crimson, reminding me of the betel-nut chewing which some Arabs and Malays appear to enjoy. As we could not converse, the situation was decidedly embarrassing for me, especially when she edged closer and began stroking my hair and fondling my cheeks. The situation was becoming intolerable and, in desperation, I called the Kikuyu to bring in the Ancient One. The old man must have been very close, as he appeared in the doorway almost instantly. I told him I had forgotten some very important duties and wished him to explain to the Queen, praying she would

forgive my abruptness through the exigencies of the occasion. She had already sprung to her feet, her splendid eyes flashing deep anger, but at the explanation given by her aged counsellor she soothed down.

However, I could not help thinking that she was not altogether satisfied. I expressed my happiness that she had been so inexpressively kind and good to me, saying that it was my desire to fulfil my mission with all speed. I continued that if the Queen would aid me in my quest by transporting me across the river it would save me weeks of weary work and also enable me to return to her much more quickly. What the old chap added to my words I shall never know but, though rebellious at first, the Queen gradually appeared satisfied and asked when I desired to go and how long I would be away. I expressed a wish to leave early the next morning if possible, explaining that if all went well I would return in about eight days from the day I set out.

She then ordered her serving-woman to send for her Councillors. When these arrived, Her Majesty asked them if arrangements could be made to have my safari transported across the river by sunrise on the morrow. They were unanimous in agreeing that this was possible but, owing to the preparations for the feast and dancing, they thought it highly inappropriate; why not wait another day? To this she made the astounding statement that, if necessary, the feasting, drinking and dancing would be cancelled. At this suggestion the ancients showed signs of rebellion over such drastic curtailment of their expected festivities, but no sooner had they expressed them than the Queen flew into a terrific temper, stamping her bare feet and lashing her councillors unmercifully with her tongue until they all meekly bowed their grizzled heads in acquiescence to her dictates. I was a silent observer of all this acting and, when it was explained, felt highly elated at the thought of so soon escaping the artifices of this clever, superb and dangerously beautiful woman. N'Ilepian was again speaking and I soon learnt that she had ordered the feast to be held, and her medicine and fetish men to have their religious ceremonies performed that night to ensure my safe return. I was commanded to be present at these ceremonies, my Ancient One urging me not to disappoint Her Majesty in this matter.

Hurrying back to my *bando* I joyfully informed Capera that we were breaking camp early next morning. I am afraid N'Oballa and Capera did not share my pleasure at vacating this place so soon. However, I could not permit the sheepish glances cast at them by some of the village maidens to thwart our getting away at this golden opportunity. Frankly, I had begun to feel qualms of distrust at my own powers of resistance in the presence of this fair-skinned woman with the features of an Egyptian Goddess who, I realized, was using every womanly wile to bewitch and ensnare me. I bade my two head boys have everything taken by sunrise next morning to the river bank and, a little later and perhaps a little too expectantly, again wended my way to N'Ilepian's village.

I found her sitting dejectedly at the entrance of her *bando* on an okapi robe. By gestures and signs I inquired the cause of her gloom. She made me understand it was because I was going away. With hands outstretched in supplication for my submissiveness, she bade me sit beside her. Smilingly, I chose to misunderstand and, instead of sitting, stepped back to the doorway and told the Kikuyu to bring in my friend, the Ancient One. On his arrival I explained my quandary and asked him to tell the Queen that I had failed to understand what hour she had set for the ceremonies to which she had invited me. She made no effort to hide her chagrin at having her tête-à-tête so unceremoniously interrupted. However, springing up, she revealed her wonderful figure in all its splendid proportions. Raising her arms above her head and spinning around several times, she explained to me through the Ancient and my Kikuyu that she would that night show me how a queen could dance the "fire worship." Her interpreter explained that this was the greatest honour she could show me. Requesting me to sit and rest whilst she went to prepare for the night's performance, she disappeared into the inner chamber.

Meanwhile, the old man explained some of their teachings and their beliefs in their Moon God, M'Bauba, and their God's high priest, Prince Taloba.

M'Bauba had been their one and only God since the beginning; he was the God of Peace and Power; he it was who had

led their ancestors from the burning deserts in a time dimmed by obscurity; delivered them from the hands of the oppressors, eventually bringing them into this fair land of peace and plenty. Here the N'el-Kasombas had lived in peace and abundance for centuries, warring on none, and, by industry, developing their domain into a land of productiveness. By their unswerving worship to the God of their ancestors they had been spared from plagues to their lands and people. M'Bauba's High Priest, Prince Taloba, second only in power to M'Bauba himself, had fulfilled every dictate of the deity; he had kept them from the invaders, their cattle and women had multiplied and their lands overflowed with grain. I could see for myself that the N'el-Kasombas had, under the watchfulness and wise guidance of good leadership, developed into an industrious people, but I was very dubious about the help their Gods had rendered them in this matter.

As the Ancient One ceased speaking, their Moon God and Prince Taloba were ceremoniously brought from their temple-like hut to within a few paces of Queen N'Ilepian. She first made a profound obeisance to the two great Gods then, turning, thanked her chancellor for so faithfully carrying out the details of her orders. For the first time I now heard N'Ilepian address the Ancient One as Shegba Hadjeba, and for some incomprehensible reason his name rang through my mind time and again for the rest of the evening—Shegba Hadjeba.

Then came a score of natives who, with great reverence, slowly carried into the arena the dais on which sat their two enormous Gods, grotesquely carved and of decided Sabaean features. The carvings of the images were most wonderfully wrought. On the God M'Bauba's head, hands and feet, were ornaments similar to those which I had seen the Queen wearing on the previous night. Prince Taloba, on whose carven face cruelty and ruthlessness were clearly portrayed, was slightly smaller. In the crook of his right arm he carried a roughly-hewn implement of war, carved from a solid piece of stone which somewhat resembled a tomahawk. I was informed that this was the weapon with which he cleared the way to pursue the judgments of his master, the great God M'Bauba. Now the Queen joined her subjects in posturing and weird dances, wailing and

beseeching their God. She had the grace and suppleness and true fiery abandonment of the fanatic and easily outshone them all in beauty and ardour.

The strangest performance of all was reserved for the closing scene. The Queen, leading twenty stalwart warriors, all hideously painted, went through their "Fire Dance"—truly an appalling but none the less thrilling thing to witness. They literally seemed to live in and with the burning embers. Some took burning brands which they slashed across their companions' bodies, others walked through and over the flames. The climax was reached when one who appeared the most ancient of the ancients and the leader of all, removed his loin-cloth and stood before his partners, holding his hands out in supplication toward the great God M'Bauba.

At this juncture the Queen prostrated herself before the image and then returned to her seat beside me. Then the whole assemblage commenced to chant. Of the words of the chant I, of course, knew nothing, but it was all dreadfully weird. The dancers were now swaying from side to side, gradually working themselves into a frenzy of inimitable contortions and then falling to the ground, entwining themselves like a mass of wriggling serpents. This evidently was the crucial moment for the old wizard for, with a last hideously prolonged wail, he threw himself full length into the huge burning fire a few paces in front of N'Ilepian. I leaped to my feet to drag the old fanatic out, but the Ancient One clutched my breeches and bade me wait and watch. With my eyes almost popping from their sockets and expecting to smell the pungent odour of burning flesh, I stood for a few brief moments trying to tear myself from the detaining grip of the Ancient's clutching hands. Then, at the first note of a mighty chorus of voices from the whole gathering, seemingly in an ecstacy of victory, the old fanatic stood up before my bewildered sight, and walked to within a pace or two of the Queen, making a deep obeisance. He stood erect before us, smiling and unharmed! I rubbed my eyes, looked from the Queen to the Ancient One, then to the old wizard in front of us. I was awake all right—but, well, had I again been hypnotized, or had this thing actually happened?

I was more than ever impressed with the fact that these people were unlike African natives either in their customs, names or gods. Their carvings were all foreign to this part of the world and yet I was haunted by a sense of familiarity of sounds and names to my ear. Upon my return to camp these thoughts occurred and reoccurred until I was as wide awake as could be. Later, when I lay down to sleep, instead of sleeping, I spent hours tossing from side to side trying to piece together the names I had heard. At last I sat up and lit the precious piece of candle which I had been saving for an emergency and, getting out my notebook and pencil, jotted down the names I had heard. For an hour or two I puzzled over them but made little or nothing from them. Then suddenly the explanation sprang into my thoughts! Those names had once been familiar names, mutilated by being handed down through ages and ages of time. The race itself which had undoubtedly been bastardized by Negroid blood, had also bastardized the names. Here then was a possible solution of the whole mystery. Their God, M'Bauba, possibly derived from the real Sabaean name, "Haubus," God of the Moon, and Taloba, a corruption of the Sabaean God, Ta'lah, whilst the name of the Ancient, Shegba Hadjeba, must have been a corruption of the Arabian name "Hadja" or "Hadji."

As previously mentioned, I had visited the ruins, in Southern Rhodesia, of Zimbabwe, the supposed ruins of the mines from whence King Solomon had gathered his vast store of gold. Since that time many ruins similar to those of Zimbabwe have been discovered throughout Rhodesia and East Central Africa which are now being declared as irrefutably the relics of the mines of King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. This being the case, N'Ilepian and her people were possibly a mixture of an off-shoot of some of these people who had become lost, or had broken away from that long-forgotten past, intermarrying with the Negroes of equatorial Africa. Would this not also account for their strange language, their fair skins, grotesque carvings and strange gods? Not being a scientist, I can only conjecture and must leave the decision to those more learned on these subjects than I.

Bidding adios to N'Ilepian was to me an embarrassing affair, but at last it was over; we immediately started crossing

the Makua, which we found a difficult task. The boats at our disposal were the worst apologies we had as yet had to cope with. Hampered as we were with quantities of food supplies, it took us a long time; much care had to be exercised before the task was completed, but at last, with a keen sense of relief, yet mingled with some regrets, I watched the last empty boat returning and waved a long farewell to Queen N'Ilepian and her territory. Now that I had the river between me and that ardent woman, I would go a long way in a different direction rather than chance returning to her too-kind hospitality again.

CHAPTER 15.

THE country extending towards the land where the Pygmies were supposed to dwell was like much of the country already covered, difficult chiefly on account of the density and height of the elephant grass, the lair of many reptiles and wild animals. However, a greater danger even than these would be the silent, lurking Pygmies themselves. The terrain was low-lying and, in many places, swampy, with densely verdured hillocks dotted here and there. Every once in a while I would climb one of these *kopjes* and spy out the land but, as far as one could see, there was no change; hills, tall grass, trees, vines and undergrowth matted into almost solid masses. The heat and humidity were unbearable, added to which were our ever-present companions—mosquitoes, in their myriads.

One day, in the midst of this dire discomfort, a fearful scream rent the still air. Looking in the direction from whence it came I saw one of the boys sinking up to his waist in what appeared to be a bed of green leaves. Yelling to N'Oballa, I dashed up on one side, motioning him to the other. Standing as near as we dared on either side, we extended our rifles across the gap just in time to enable the boy to grasp them, as he had sunk almost to his chin. I will never forget the look of horror on his face as N'Oballa and I pulled him gently out, dragging him to one end where the ground was firmer and eventually getting him clear. A moment longer and we would have been too late to save him from a ghastly death.

According to my reckoning we were now close to the last hundred miles of our journey, providing, of course, I had mapped out its location fairly accurately. Here again the country was comparatively free from the eternal jumble of vines and brush. Then almost without warning the whole terrain gently lifted to an entirely changed country. If my calculations were anyway near correct, then I felt sure we must be approaching the reputed

territory of the Pygmies. From here on, each day, en route, we must don our kongonia-hide cuirasses.

A few days later we crossed what I judged to be the last river before reaching the sphere of the Pygmies' influence. Two days passed without incident. The territory now being traversed seemed absolutely uninhabited. This eerie quietness, however, was suddenly broken by one of N'Oballa's boys, who came rushing forward with the news that N'Oballa wanted a *indaba.*

I swiftly retraced my way to the rear. In a fever of excitement, N'Oballa informed me that he believed that for some considerable distance back they had been watched and followed. One of the boys had been instructed to run ahead some distance, then branch off at a tangent in the direction toward which they were travelling, to watch, and as soon as anything was seen to rejoin the safari unnoticed if possible.

Reporting back the boy had informed N'Oballa that he had seen little men, incredibly small men, darting silently about on either side of the safari's line of march, but always keeping just beyond spear-throwing distance. Nothing hostile, however, had been attempted, but . . .

The last word, however, was hardly uttered when a cry of alarm from one of the boys in the vanguard of our line sent me racing back again in that direction. No explanation was necessary, for there, lying prone on the ground, was Magnolia—legs sprawled spread-eagle, eyes already glazed, foam oozing from her mouth and nostrils.

Kneeling down, I gently stroked her velvety muzzle, then pulling out my knife ripped open the bag containing the poison antidote, still fastened to her back. With trembling hands I fumbled for the phial and the tiny case containing the needle. A sudden convulsion . . . and before I could even remove the hypodermic needle from its case, Magnolia went through a further series of violent convulsions, then was still.

In a voice as firm as I could muster, I gave orders for Magnolia to be quickly covered with shrubs and boughs.

One of the boys pointed to something embedded in Magnolia's rump. One glance was sufficient; it was a Pygmy dart, identical to the one found stuck in the sapling on that far off

night when Jacobus had re-told M'Golomba's story to me. I instructed N'Oballa and Capera to post guards in every direction a little distance off. It was not until they had turned to obey that I saw another tiny dart sticking out of N'Oballa's hide armour just where it protected his ear.

"Wait!" Taking my handkerchief and doubling it up, I gently pulled. Out it came. Obviously sufficient force could not be used by the Pygmies with their blow-pipes to send their deadly missiles completely through the tough kongonia-hide armour. How fortunate had been my foresight in preparing for eventualities such as this.

The next afternoon, while travelling through an unusually dense patch of country, we suddenly became re-acquainted with our cunning little visitors, and although our own scouts were out and, as we and they thought, were all alertness, they proved useless, inexperienced, and amateurish compared with the uncanny skilfulness exhibited by the shadowy little devils who kept popping up from nowhere.

Fortunately for us, the Pygmies, for some inexplicable reason, now appeared to shoot their darts deliberately at our necks only. Apparently experience had taught them the vulnerability of this usually unprotected part of the human anatomy. The percentage of direct hits was high, considering the primitiveness of their long reed blow-pipe gun.

The reaction, I thought, of their untutored minds at seeing the safari continue its march unharmed after being repeatedly struck in vital spots by their darts would be most interesting to know.

Repeatedly I had to prevent the boys from firing in return, the principal reason for this being that it would be a waste of ammunition, as we seldom saw or heard anything to fire at. Also it would have been a waste of time to attempt to pursue the attackers, for this too would have been futile.

There was nothing to do but continue our march; this we did as fast as the jungle entanglement permitted. Soon after noon it appeared that the Lilliputian pests had slipped away, as the soft thud of their darts was no longer heard against the hide armour.

As a precaution, a site for the night's camp was decided upon much earlier than usual. I ordered a double *bomba,* each to be piled high with thornbush, with plenty of space between the inner and outer walls. This, at least, would hold the vicious little heathens and prevent their darts from reaching a real mark. By sunset the job was completed. Having made the *bomba* as secure as possible from a surprise attack, everyone fell to enjoying a well-deserved and long postponed meal.

As nothing unusual occurred during the night, I decided to remain here for another day or two.

I sent N'Oballa with a few safari boys off hunting, but warned him not to use his gun except in dire necessity. They were to move through the underbrush silently and to be continuously alert and to use only their bows and arrows or spears to bring down game. Off they glided softly, mingling with the elusive jungle shadows as though part of them, N'Oballa promising to return about noon.

Meanwhile, Capera and the boys busied themselves about camp. We were so busy on our separate tasks that little notice of the passage of time was taken until Capera called me to midday tiffin; even then I paid little heed to N'Oballa's non-return. But when one—two—three hours more had passed and still no sign, I began to have qualms for their safety. Still later, I became definitely anxious, realizing it would soon be dark; even now there was barely time left for a search before darkness fell.

At last, unable to remain inactive under such a strain, I hastily organized a searching party of three boys; more I would not spare from the *bomba.* They had gone a bare ten minutes when voices from a considerable distance could be heard, mingling with N'Oballa's deep basso, and a few minutes later the young giant reached the outer walls of the *bomba.* Quickly the entrance was thrown open and, much to my relief, also surprise, the whole party, with a prisoner added, marched in.

Throwing their loads of game to the ground, all the boys but N'Oballa went off to mingle with their camp companions. He walked over to me to make the startling announcement that he had seen the great *donga* where large parties of Pygmies make council with the Obanzis.

"What nonsense!" I answered.

"It am true, Bwana, and I bring back da proof for you."

"If you actually believe that, N'Oballa, you had better come over to my bivouac and tell me about it."

This was his story: N'Oballa and his boys, having secured all the game needed, had temporarily cached it, leaving one boy on guard, while the others and himself, out of sheer curiosity, decided to travel unhampered farther afield. Having found nothing further to interest them, N'Oballa was about to give the order to return to their cache when one of his boys came swiftly in from the left flank to report that he had smelled food cooking.

Silently they crept in the direction the boy had pointed out. From the cover of the bushes they watched a big burly native sitting before a fire, eating. N'Oballa signalled his party to spread out, gradually closing in on the unsuspecting native. Having reached within striking distance, N'Oballa, with a mighty bound, pounced upon the stranger who, taken completely off guard, could do nothing except struggle futilely against such odds. As soon as his struggle ceased, N'Oballa prodded his captive towards camp.

"But why did you make him a prisoner? He had offered no harm to you, N'Oballa."

"Ndyo, Bwana, I no give 'im da chance."

"I question him, Bwana, but as he no answer or tell N'Oballa what I know my Bwana want to know, I tell one of my boys to stick hot twigs from da fire in his ears. He tell N'Oballa then, upazi, Bwana," and added blandly: "But, Bwana, the burning wood have no chance to much harm him and after, when he no more speak, I just threaten. That am enough. Him talk more."

I marvelled at this guileless giant Masai's lack of understanding of the white man's abhorrence of anything savouring of torture.

Continuing his story, N'Oballa said that he learned from the prisoner that he was an Obanzi, and that their chief was now only one day's march south with an *impi* of fifty tribesmen; they were travelling quickly in order to reach this meeting place with the Pygmies on the morrow. The prisoner had said that the Obanzi Chief was coming to take over a much larger quantity of trading things than ever before—hence the stronger force of

warriors for safe escort of the Pygmies' treasure. The Pygmies, he had said, were due to arrive from their country in the north early the next day.

"N'Oballa," I asked, "did any of your boys know, before or during the questioning of your prisoner, what the Pygmies' little hide pouches are supposed to contain?"

Emphatically, N'Oballa emphasized the fact that none knew. "Even him not know."

I felt considerably relieved to learn this, for if the true story leaked out amongst the safari boys, there was no knowing what might happen with such an untamed lot, barely a step or two removed from barbarism and cannibalistic ritual.

A sorry, sullen, ferocious-looking devil the prisoner was, unusually big, with a massive expanse of chest, denoting unusual staying powers. Possibly he was one of the messengers, perhaps one of the swift stone-carriers I had heard about from Jacobus.

Liberally I plastered soothing salve upon the slightly-singed patches on the outside of his ears, for which I received a grunt of approval and a look of wonder from the patient. Calling Kobanzi, I instructed him to explain to the Obanzi that so long as he did not attempt to escape, his life and welfare would be secure.

CHAPTER 16.

THAT evening over the camp-fire I went into conference with Capera and N'Oballa upon the mode of action for the next day. Having completed our plans, the prisoner was sent for. I was anxious to learn, if possible, just one thing more from him.

As soon as the Obanzi had squatted, I lifted my rifle and pointing it at the fellow's head made as if to blow it off. The Obanzi made no movement nor showed any sign of fear; he simply looked inquisitive, that was all.

"Have you ever seen anything like this before?"

"No, Bwana."

"Does your chief, or his warriors, possess any such thing as this?"

"No, Bwana, I have not seen it before. What is it?"

I needed further proof as to whether the fellow was lying or not, so the interpreter was instructed to shout suddenly at the prisoner: "The Bwana knows you lie and, as promised you, if you lie he claims your life!" Saying which, Kobanzi raised the gun.

Still the fellow showed no fear; instead, he shrugged his shoulders more in puzzlement than anything else and muttered: "I no lie to the kugwa Bwana."

Then without explaining what the gun was really for, I asked what weapons his chief and brother warriors used.

"Bows and arrows and spears," was his reply.

Satisfied, I detailed N'Oballa to guard the prisoner. I knew that if the prisoner escaped at this critical juncture, joint action by the Pygmies and Obanzis would quickly follow.

The knowledge of being at long last within reach of my goal plunged me into a fever of excitement. Would my vow to old Chief M'Abuta soon be liquidated?

Very early the next morning every member of the safari, except two boys left to guard the prisoner, filed silently out of

the *bomba* in the direction of the Pygmies' amphitheatre. Noiselessly, and with the cunning and caution of jungle leopards, we threaded our way through the maze of brush and trees until N'Oballa, in the lead, signalled a *semana*. He whispered to me that it was not far from here where he and his boys had opened out to surround the Obanzi.

Then a signal was given and within a few moments everyone was hidden from view. Accompanied by N'Oballa, creeping on our bellies, never rustling even a fallen leaf, we proceeded cautiously. As we drew closer to the *donga*, low, murmuring voices could be heard. At last our laborious crawling abruptly ended as we reached to within a spear's throw distance; by carefully lifting my head I had a view of the naturally-formed arena. To my consternation I saw that the Pygmies had already arrived. At my first glimpse my eyes must have bulged from their sockets with dumbfounded surprise. These weren't ordinary Pygmies! Human beings, true enough, and fully matured at that. Adults, men and women, matured and fully developed, were yet no bigger than huge over-sized dolls, whose features were totally unlike any of the natives or Pygmies I had previously seen in the Eastern Itura. They reminded me more of the dark-skinned Malays of the Cape, a large percentage of whose features were not unlike those of the natives of India.

Spellbound, I gazed in silence, taking in every detail of their mannerisms, their scanty coverings, their pieces of fantastically-wrought ornaments gleaming like burnished gold. Here, unquestionably, was a race of people hitherto unknown.

They appeared thoroughly disciplined and organized, carrying on an animated conversation amongst themselves as if discussing an extremely vital question. For the moment, at least, they resembled in no way the treacherous, blood-thirsty little demons we had encountered a few days back.

Suddenly, into their midst leaped a panting, perspiring Obanzi warrior, obviously an advance runner of the main body. I heard him utter a few unintelligible words which put the little people into instant activity. Fires were stirred up, preparations for a feast were hastily commenced. Then loud voices were heard approaching and a few minutes later into the arena strode a giant

Obanzi, followed by his aides and lastly by many warriors. Obviously the usual amenities and courtesies were abandoned, for without any preliminaries all squatted; food and drink were immediately handed to the new arrivals by the group of puny people.

No sooner had the Obanzi Chief satisfied his appetite than he commenced an *indaba* with the Pygmy Chief. As the conversation proceeded, an angry tone was gradually injected into the Obanzi's voice. Surprise, then consternation, appeared on the faces of the Pygmies. Whispering to N'Oballa to silently bring up the interpreter, I edged as close as I dared to the *donga*.

Suppressed excitement permeated the atmosphere. The Obanzis were glancing at one another and whispering amongst themselves. The Pygmies, undoubtedly in a highly nervous state, were bunched together.

A climax was suddenly reached when a Pygmy, presumably on orders from his Chief, started stealing away from the arena, only to be instantly detected by the Obanzi leader, who brought him to a sudden stop by a raucous bawl ordering him to come back, unless he wished to be speared.

Kobanzi translated that the discussion between the Pygmy and Obanzi Chief was a dispute as to what share of the profits on the trading deals with the Pygmies' goods the Obanzis were to have. Evidently the Pygmy Chief was obstinate; he stood staunchly to conditions of their original trading pact. At this, the Obanzi became increasingly aggressive; he appeared to be deliberately goading the little Pygmy into committing some overt act.

There then came a slight pause. The Pygmy Chief, looking ludicrous in his puny but superb dignity, stood up before the gorilla-like Obanzi and quietly, but firmly, refused the unjust demands, and furthermore requested the Obanzi Chief to immediately withdraw from their territory, as their mutual trading pact was at an end.

Springing up, the infuriated Obanzi roared his orders; instantly spears were raised; his warriors commenced encircling the pathetically defenseless little people. This was enough for me. "Hurry, Kobanzi! Tell N'Oballa to creep silently around the whole arena to post a boy here and there completely around

this *donga*. When I give the signal of the night owl all are to spring forward as one man—not an instant before—then let fly at the Obanzis only, and tell N'Oballa to gather his picked fighters here, as I shall want a few good marksmen to rely upon."

Even as I gave the signal for my boys to attack, the big grinning Obanzi raised his spear in anticipation of impaling the little-man. Then pandemonium was at that instant loosed. The combined war-cries of the Masias and Nandys of the safari boys momentarily stultified those murdering Obanzis.

N'Oballa, the strong, sent his spear flying with unerring aim straight into the broad chest of the Obanzi Chief, whose own spear barely missed the Pygmy Chief in its downward thrust.

The Pygmies, realizing that succour had miraculously come to hand, now joined in the ruthless conflict. One after the other the Obanzis staggered off with a little stick embedded in their necks. A few minutes later, seeing that the day was lost to them and with thought to fallen comrades, those who were still unscathed bounded out of the arena, to be instantly swallowed up in the jungle, but only to be tracked down by the inexorable pursuing Pygmies, who did not relinquish the chase until every Obanzi of that *impi* was despatched.

Calling Capera over to my side, I instructed him to return to our own *bomba* and in some way connive at the escape of the Obanzi prisoner before N'Oballa returned with his boys. I then turned my immediate attention to the fallen combatants.

N'Oballa, although still standing, was badly slashed. Stoically he showed no outward sign of pain, except for the fact that he clutched his left hand to his right breast, through which his life-blood was oozing. Unflinchingly he waited. On examining his wound I saw that N'Oballa's right breast had been slit through with the side swipe of a spear. I wondered how it could have been possible for such a thrust to slip around the fellow's ribs without actually having pierced his chest. Silently I went about my task of sewing up the wound—not a groan escaped N'Oballa's lips; no sooner had I finished bandaging him than he commenced giving assistance to others. There seemed no end to the fellow's courage and fortitude.

While still swabbing wounds, the little Pygmy Chief toddled

up to my side; he gesticulated excitedly, making me understand that I was wanted "upazi over there," where one of N'Oballa's warriors lay. The unfortunate fellow had two spear wounds, one of which still held the weapon. The long blade of the fighting spear had impaled both buttocks as neatly as a butcher would skewer up a prime joint. There was only one thing to be done.

Calling several boys to hold the sufferer, then gripping the weapon, I heaved; with a sickening squelch, out it came. Into the wound I pushed a cane which I had bound with antiseptic saturated gauze. Painful, primitive, but efficacious. The poor fellow's other wound was a thrust through the fleshy part of his side. This dressed, my attention was turned to others.

Several Pygmies also needed attention. Incredible as it seemed, however, neither the Pygmies nor any of my own boys suffered one fatality in that swiftly furious melée. At last I was able to sit down for a few minutes' rest. Immediately the little Chief, with a couple of his men, came waddling up; welcome offerings of food and calabashes of drink were handed to me.

Through Kobanzi I requested the Pygmy Chief to give food and drink to my boys. Readily and generously the Pygmies responded to this request. In fact, the little people tried to show in every conceivable manner their gratitude.

Up to this moment I had had no opportunity to converse with the Pygmy Chief, except for my request for food and drink for my boys. For the moment, at least, the little "big one" was busily enough occupied running from one to another plying them with things to eat and drink, stopping only every once in a while to screech out in his high-pitched voice orders for more victuals to be brought along.

I decided that now, while the details of the conflict were fresh in the mind of the Pygmy Chief, would be the best opportunity possible of reaching an understanding with him. Accordingly I instructed Kobanzi to offer his salutations and request the Pygmy Chief to come over, as his Bwana desired conversation with him.

Having been of such material service to the Pygmies, I felt reasonably assured that our help could not but bring about a favourable and generous arrangement between us.

I first told the chief my name, and that I was a hunter from a far country seeking game, new lands and adventures.

"What is your name, and the name of your tribe, and where is your village?" I asked the chubby little man standing erectly dignified in front of me.

With grave solemnity and in a voice of ill-concealed pride he said: "I am Loba-Komba. My people are the M'Zalis. Our main village is about this distance from here," and so saying, he pointed to the sun and indicated by measuring off an imaginary portion of its orbit across the sky that it would take about a third of a day to reach it.

Loba-Komba spoke in a tongue unknown to me, nor was the interpreter familiar with it. Nevertheless, after a few minutes, Kobanzi picked up the drift of it well enough to make sense. Loba-Komba continued: "With my fetish fire-spitters and through the bravery of your followers, the kugwa Bwana has proved to Loba-Komba that he is a friend of the M'Zalis, and as such I, Loba-Komba, will be a friend to him and will ensure the safety of his safari and himself whilst he is the guest in the safety and comfort of the M'Zali village."

Concluding his little speech, Loba-Komba, making a bow, said: "Come, Bwana, it is time. We have a long distance to go and we must travel slowly because of our wounded."

CHAPTER 17.

SLOW indeed was the journey—firstly, because those who were able had to assist the wounded; secondly, on account of the increasing steepness of the climb. The end of the grind, however, came late in the day. Evidently news of our approach had preceded us.

Nearing the village, I could see doll-like *bandos* dotting the lee side of a long sloping hill, the summit of which was capped by a great massive natural rocky formation, the shape of which resembled a top hat minus the brim. Around each hut at about the height of the hut itself were closely planted small tree trunks or young saplings. These I learned were planted for the purpose of safeguarding the occupants from wild animals and potential surprise attacks by chance marauding enemies, as well as gorillas, which, I was informed, abounded in this territory.

As we passed along through the village in the wake of their Chief, small naked children peered at us from behind their near-nude mothers, at first, timidly enough, but seeing their Chief walking unharmed and on friendly terms with the strange white Bwana, they too very soon lost their fear and commenced trotting along to the rear of the little band. Then the mothers, fantastically small yet perfectly formed, came out, while the old men hobbled desperately along behind.

Hearing an unusual voice at my back and swiftly turning, I was astonished at seeing a swarm of little men, all armed with toy-like bows and arrows and long six-foot blow-pipes, stepping along after them in a somewhat military formation.

Having reached the centre of the village, Loba-Komba halted in front of a hut considerably larger than the others. The little chief's high-pitched voice yelled for silence. In a few words he told his people what I and my boys had done that day for the M'Zalis. He called upon all to pay homage, to care for the wounded, to feed and guard the safety of every member of my

impi. Neglect to do so would be punished by sending the culprit to the fire pit.

I requested Loba-Komba to permit my boys to build some *niumba ya mehanzi* suitable to domicile them, on the cleared piece of land on the rise over to the West.

"Yes, and my people will help make the *bandos* for you," assented the Chief.

Thereupon, every uninjured member of my safari was set to building *bandos*, each large enough to accommodate several normal-sized humans. A special and larger one was rushed to completion for myself, and nearby another, jointly for Capera and N'Oballa, and with the help of a swarm of the Sana Watu Wadogos, these were finished well before darkness.

During the greater part of the time these huts were being built I tried to become better acquainted with Loba-Komba and his councillors. I learned all I could about their customs and the general lay-out of the village. I noticed a separate village of miniature size a little distance beyond the Chief's *bando* and farther up the slope. It was, in reality, a tiny village within a village. From a distance I could see that it was exceedingly well cared for and had a *bando* of larger dimensions in its centre. Pointing to it, I asked Loba-Komba: "Your council house?"

As no immediate reply was offered, I suddenly turned my gaze and caught Loba-Komba intently scrutinizing me; then, after a long pause the chief spoke: "Perhaps the Bwana will soon learn, but for the present I must ask you to give your promise not to enter that *bomba* and not until Loba-Komba gives permission. Should you refuse to respect this request, Loba-Komba, himself, may not be able to protect the kugwa Bwana."

"I shall not attempt to violate your desires," I replied. I could not, however, help pondering over this incident. I wondered what surprise or mystery was up there, and, a few moments later, was nonplussed by Loba-Komba himself remarking: "All in good time the Bwana shall learn what he is now so greatly puzzled over. The kugwa is surprised that I know this? Yet, why not? Loba-Komba can see and know many things." His wrinkled little face peered up at me, his black eyes seeming to bore right into my brain.

"Loba-Komba," I said, "you seem to know a great many things. Do you also know what particular interest directed my journeyings this way?"

"Perhaps, and frankly I admit having put many obstacles in your way to prevent you ever coming anywhere near the territory of the M'Zalis."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because, kugwa Bwana, we fear all strangers. When my warriors returned from afar with the startling news that a white man was travelling with a small *impi* through the jungle, that he and his safari had proved immune to our poison darts, and had continued without hindrance to pursue his way toward our domain, such news concerned me and my councillors greatly. To the kugwa Bwana alone will I reveal one of the things that Loba-Komba has been taught during his very long life—that most of the superstitious beliefs of our people are of the fetish man's making and are used by him as a weapon with which to sway the simple minds of our people. Such doctrines, however, no longer hold me, Loba-Komba, captive. I have learned much wisdom, and so, instead of openly ridiculing the native's credulity, I kept silent and again took council."

"From whom?" I asked.

"From my highest instructor," was Loba-Komba's reply. "I was taught the art of great patience, and also that for the present it would be wisest, true or otherwise, to let my people continue to believe in the absurd superstition that a white god who could not be harmed was coming to our domain. Your coming has been revealed to me for some time, but I did not know you were so near, and please remember this, kugwa Bwana, that for your own safety, to my people you will remain a real god. And now kugwa Bwana, will you now show me what saved you from our poisoned Pygmy darts?"

As directly to the point as Loba-Komba's inquiry, I explained my experiment with the kongoni-hide cuirasses, at which the little rotund rascal giggled himself into a childlike paroxysm of laughter. Then with sudden seriousness he conducted me to a heap of skins on which we both sat for a few minutes in silence.

Loba-Komba then clapped his hands to summon several of his

chiefs and councillors. As soon as they were all squatted comfortably around, he excused himself on the plea of having important matters to attend to and that on his return shortly they would have a great feast.

For upwards of an hour I was entertained by the little wise men, the smallest of whom enjoyed the thrill of balancing himself in the palms of my hands, to the intense amusement of all present. I lifted two together high above my head, and stood one on either shoulder, and another perched upright atop my head.

They felt my muscles and cracked my fingers. I encouraged their interest in my physique, meanwhile guilelessly plying the unsuspecting innocents with every conceivable question regarding their customs and the number of people in their village, and so forth. By the time Loba-Komba had returned I had learned many helpful pointers and had just reached the edge of a question which I had been dying to ask when, unobtrusively, Loba-Komba entered and to my dumbfounded consternation answered my unspoken question.

"Why does the kugwa Bwana wish to learn of such things from my chiefs? Have patience, my friend; many things may be revealed. Come, the feast is awaiting us."

Among all the assembled chiefs, lieutenants, warriors, womenfolk and children, I did not detect one single instance of deformity, defective eyes or skin disease. They were undeniably the healthiest and as nearly physically perfect of any group of people, white or black, I had so far seen. Their physical development was remarkable, for although undoubtedly the world's smallest adults, their bodies and heads were in perfect proportion. The women, nude but for fibre and bark breechclouts were, to my critical eye, all but faultless.

The feast itself was not unlike many others I had willingly and unwillingly taken part in. The women, as usual, served and attended to the men's every need, and did not themselves share in the eating until the males were satisfied.

During these gastronomical achievements I learned very little more of any importance than that which I had already learned during Loba-Komba's absence. The chief items of interest were that someone of greater power in the tribe than Loba-Komba

himself existed—someone apparently holding the supreme reverence of all the M'Zalis, including Loba-Komba himself. God-like homage was paid to whomever this exalted one may be. I wondered if such a one did actually exist or whether this was just another superstitious tit-bit of these strange people, fostered for selfish interests by their fetish man, or perhaps by Loba-Komba himself. The other item of interest came to light when my interpreter explained that the few councillors and lieutenants left behind prior to the feast had, in their general conversation, made a casual remark that seemed to connect a river with gold and coloured stones.

The feast ended, and with the usual amenities finished, I wandered toward my *bando,* where I found Loba-Komba and his chiefs awaiting me; after making obeisance, they trotted off to their own little toy-like homes.

A hut to sleep in! It was home—the first real hut I had slept in for months. There were *karosses* galore; water-filled calabashes had been placed for my use. It all seemed more like a dream than reality, and for the first time in a very long while I sank down on my bed of skins to fall instantly asleep and dream of rushing rivers with gleaming gems sparkling tantalizingly up at me.

How long I had slept I did not know, neither did I care. I still felt heavy with sleep when, eventually, I was awakened to full consciousness. I gradually became aware of a strange olive-complexioned face peering down at me. Where was Capera? Momentarily I had no memory of Loba-Komba and his Lilliputian-like people. I fancied myself back in my home; but who was this woman with the long raven hair and lovely brown skin, whose features reminded me of what—ah yes! that was it—a Syrian—maybe an Egyptian.

Gently but firmly she forced me back on my couch as I tried to sit up. In the soft soothing language of the Bantu she bade me: "Lie still! You have been ill. I will send for your Capera. You are now out of danger—you will recover quickly and grow strong again."

"Wait!" I feebly called. "Tell me, how long have I been here, and who are you?"

Reseating herself beside my bed of robes, she gently took my hand. I gazed at it, that hand, puzzled. It had been bronzed, strong and dirty when I went to sleep. It was now white and thin—scraggy.

She had started to speak: "This is the end of the fourth week since you first lay down on this couch to sleep. You have had a very bad attack of black-water fever. The fetish men of Loba-Komba's village provided herbs which have cured you. Be thankful, my friend, for having earned the right of claiming the protection and friendship of Loba-Komba and his M'Zalis. His wise council has strengthened the thought amongst them that you are indeed a god, and not just another human being even as I."

"But, you haven't told me who you are!"

"I am the one you heard of," she replied simply. "And now you have spoken enough. Lie still, and I will send for your Capera."

Stately as a tiny queen she glided from the *bando* and a few minutes later in rushed Capera and N'Oballa.

"Bwana, our Bwana!" they whimpered. "You am awake. We think maybe our Bwana, after him win through the jungle him die, and leave his Capera and his N'Oballa."

Tears trickled unrestrainedly down their smiling, happy faces. Affectionately they stroked my hands, asked if I had pain anywhere, and if I was hungry and would like some roasted impali.

While still impetuously bombarding me with their glad questions, a voice, soft and kind, but with a tone of one who does not tolerate disobedience, called:

"Capera, N'Oballa, you have stayed long enough, and already have spoken far too much."

"Ndyo, Binguni Johari, Malhia Yangu!"

"Just one minute more, please!" I pleaded.

"Very well, but no more," was the reply.

"Capera," I asked, "why did you address her like that?"

"Because dat am what she is, Bwana, and lots more, too! She am to everyone here a goddess and am greater than Loba-Komba. She am his wife. She am da *mze ya tele watu wadogo!*" (The real Chief of all the Pygmies.)

Then Capera bent over to whisper in my ear:

"Bwana, she nurse you day and every night. You die for sure if she no nurse you. Berry pritty, too, Bwana!"

Having unloaded his mind of this store of information, Capera made his exit with the oft-repeated salutation of: "Yambo, Bwana, yambo."

CHAPTER 18.

DURING the weeks of my convalescence, I continued to store up information concerning the M'Zalis, Chief Loba-Komba, and his raven-haired Egyptian-looking Queen. Obviously, all who came in contact with her not only obeyed her slightest wish, but literally worshipped her.

She it was who had, as her name implied, been sent to the M'Zalis from the sky. Her coming had brought many changes. Improvement and progress had been made in the lives of the Pygmies. An army had been methodically trained; a spy system and a retinue of guards and look-outs had been posted with far more Western principles of military precision than that of any of the Central African Pygmy potentates. Basket weaving and an ingenious method of weaving sisal into mats for the floors of their huts and a covering for themselves at night had been fostered. Primitive agriculture for raising corn, barley and a few vegetables had reached a point of supplying their own bare needs.

It became plainly obvious to me that the M'Zalis did not engage in mining gold or precious stones. It was, therefore, a mystery where and how they came into possession of their gold. Through the sheer inquisitiveness of N'Oballa, I eventually learned that the M'Zalis unquestionably produced from somewhere bright-coloured stones, and for years had bartered them for necessary supplies through the Obanzis, their go-betweens. Where they secured these stones, however, was to me as yet an unsolved mystery.

I studied their customs and laws, and from their post high up on their watch-tower, morning and evening, I heard, in wailing plaintive tones, the Priests calling their people to prayer.

Many of the women, I had noticed, had tattooed markings down their spines. On inquiring the reason I learnt that the

length of the tattoo mark depended upon the number of children they had borne. Each tattooed vertebra represented one child and, therefore, it was simple arithmetic to learn the number of each one's progeny. The longer the tattoo, the more venerated the woman.

Almost every M'Zali woman wore gold jewellery, mostly of very ancient fashion, and a few wore headdresses which unquestionably resembled those worn by the Malay women. Many of the gold ornaments which they wore were lighter and generally of much finer workmanship than those of African native make. For instance, their golden ornaments, to a considerable degree, were somewhat similar to the Syrian or Egyptian filagree. This, as is well known, is the favourite style adopted by Malay gold workers. Many of the women wore bangles around their ankles and rings on their big and small toes, whilst all the females—even the very young children—wore golden ornaments through the right nostril. A few older women, especially the wives of the headmen and the Chief, wore ornaments through each nostril from which was looped a string of jingling gold ornaments to each ear, giving the wearer quite an exotic appearance. Also, although they were so very small, all these women whose ages I could not possibly guess, were superbly proportioned. During my stay amongst them, I never saw one deformed male or female, nor anyone who could be described as really ugly.

Their marriage ceremony is, I believe, one of the strangest in existence and in it I again traced Malayan influence.

When a wedding is arranged, the wily old Priests, under the pretext of gathering donations for the happy couple, solicit almost every member of the tribe, securing enough edibles, skins, household utensils (gourds), vines (treated to prolong their natural elasticity) and stripped tree limbs to supply several bridal couples, thereby replenishing their own stores and assuring themselves against the necessity of personal effort for weeks. Naturally they look forward to a marriage with selfish expectancy.

To the little bride, however, the day of days is a matter of deep concern. At daybreak she is prepared by her immediate relatives and, as a pledge of her chastity, her small body is encased in a corsage of dressed skins which extends from her thighs to

just below her breasts. This corsage is laced with sufficient tightness as to make it impossible for the poor creature to bend her body more than to sit in a bolt upright position and none but her lordly master may release her.

The marriage ceremony is performed in the early morning. The Priests escort the happy couple into the presence of the King, seated a few paces in front of his *bando*. On such occasions his seat is placed on a raised platform. This crudely-built platform is made of logs interlaced with stout vines. Raised at the back, it gradually slopes down and away from the King's seat somewhat in a great circular formation of steps.

A Priest, standing with the bridal couple before the King, chants what I afterwards learned was a prayer for their happiness and productivity. With arms entwined the couple kneel, facing the King. The High Priest, who is master of ceremonies, then pierces the lobes of the left ears of the bride and groom, pressing therefrom a few drops of blood into a small calabash. This he hands to one of the assisting priests who immediately milks into it the milk of a goat held conveniently near. He then returns the calabash to the High Priest who, holding the gourd on high, chants what is presumably their Bridal Hymn, though in truth to my ears it sounded much more like a lamentation. The gourd is then handed first to the bride and then to her swain from which they both in turn drink, this being the signal for the completion of the union and meaning much the same as when we say, "I will."*

Assembled back of the Priests and bridal couple are, first, the relatives of the bride and groom, then the King's Body-Guard, councillors and warriors and, lastly, the villagers. In the clearing in front of the platform, which is in reality the centre of the village, a great feast has been prepared by a small army of women. Several fat impali, a couple of pigs and a goat or two are still smoking on the spits awaiting the onslaught.

After the gorging is completed, the villagers gradually disperse, but the ordeal of the bride continues. She is now placed

* This custom showed a similarity to the "Blood Brother" ceremonies of the Wanandis and the N'Arukamis. It would be interesting to trace its origin. However, I was unable to learn from whom and where it emanated, doubtless because it was buried in antiquity.

on a litter which is made of branches covered with freshly-plucked palm leaves. On this she is carried by her husband and their relatives through the village, stopping at any and every *bando* which they desire to visit, the inmates coming out to pay their homage to a new bride who, still encased in her inelastic bindings, is not allowed to utter a sound.

When the relatives and friends have wearied of this visiting, the bride is at last taken to the newly-built *bando* of her mate. Here she is placed in a sitting posture upon a raised seat, unable to turn or bend, nor dare she break her enforced silence. Thus she is compelled to remain all day whilst the women of the village troop in singly and in groups to pay their respects to her on this the last day of her virginity.

Meanwhile the groom does the "gay bachelor" for the last time with his erstwhile cronies, sampling calabashes of native beer here, there and everywhere until sunset; then for the first time he enters the bridal *bando* and at last releases his bride—and woe to the poor bride if she be found unchaste. Such, however, is rare, as these Pygmies are a particularly moral people.

Salem Husega, one of Loba-Komba's chief aides, had recently shown considerable partiality for my company. He showed me around many of Zaphanza's proposed improvements and volunteered a wealth of information, but when I asked the origin or cause of a curl of smoke continuously rising at a short distance from the village, which I had but casually noticed, he immediately became evasive; his very evasiveness, however, merely gave an impetus to my insatiable inquisitiveness. Eventually, I am inclined to believe, he gave in, if for nothing else than to have peace. To my astonishment and dismay too, I learnt from him the tragic purpose of the Pygmies' fire-pit, and the reason for its being kept eternally alive with the debris of the village and augmented by continuous feeding of fuel gathered from the nearby jungle.

Salem Husega told me that it was a perpetual fiery symbol of morality to their young men and women. The wizardly little sage related that on the wedding night of a young couple, should the groom accuse the bride of being other than a virgin, it was his privilege to exercise an age-old custom, that of calling a con-

ference with the bride's people who, accompanied by their own particular fetish man, would sit in judgment on her. If she be found as accused then, regardless of rank, according to the M'Zali law it was their duty to condemn her to the fire-pit.

The fire-pit had, ages ago, been an outlet of a river, now long since sunken to a great depth. This had happened ages ago, in fact long before the knowledge of any living M'Zali. Thereafter a perpetual draft was caused by suction from the depths below. One of their ancestors had had the inspiration of having the debris from the village cast into the pit's gaping mouth. One day, live embers had been inadvertently thrown in with the other debris, with the result that the many years of accumulated muck and debris became ignited and quickly developed into a roaring perpetual inferno.

The fire-pit claimed its last victim three generations ago.

I began to realize that, owing to the favourable light in which I stood with the people generally, the hoodwinking and superstitious credulity of whom had been connived at by the king himself, I had aroused the jealousy and rancour of their High Priest. This, I believed, was his reason for showing me some of his diabolical tricks.

The old villain led me to a temple about a mile from the village, set in a clearing. He informed me it had been built by their ancestors—a temple certainly worthy of sheltering their most sacred deity and costliest of ornaments and idols. How far they had brought the stones of which it was built one could only surmise. When I tried to ascertain how long ago their ancestors had arrived the Pygmies always pointed to the sun then, turning to the faint reflection of the moon in the sky, they would point first to the one and then to the other, close one eye and repeatedly blink at one orb, apparently trying to explain that it was so many blinks of the moon and sun when their ancestors had arrived at their hidden domain. In my opinion they were trying to make me understand that the period of time when their forefathers, before reaching this land, sailed the waters, was so many eclipses of the sun and moon; at least this was the legend handed down from father to son for ages. This temple must have been built long before these people had become so diminutive as it

would have been a physical impossibility for the men I saw to have placed in position those huge slabs of stone. On the other hand, it was, of course, possible for them to have secured men infinitely their superior in physical power to accomplish this task.

My first impression of the wonderfully preserved building was the remarkable foresight of those who had planned it, it being also used as a watch-tower. There must have been about three acres of cleared ground in the centre of which stood the temple. The land here rose to a considerable height so that watchers from the summit of the tower were well above the tallest tree-tops of the surrounding jungle. When I visited the summit in company of my companion, the High Priest, I instantly realized why, under ordinary circumstances, it would have been impossible for anyone to approach the Pygmies' village undetected. An uninterrupted view was unfolded to my gaze and dimly in the distance, far to the north, I could see, by the use of my field glasses, the faint glimmer of the River M'Bomu.

Descending from the tower, I made an inspection of the building inside and out. The temple itself was of remarkable construction. I could only conjecture its age, but from the crumbling stonework and the smoothness of parts caused by the constant friction of wind and weather, it must have been many hundreds of years old—at a guess, I would say, at least twelve to fifteen hundred years. During the building of the edifice an attempt to imitate the Malayan type of architecture was made although, of course, it was not so graceful.

It was nevertheless beautiful and of enormous strength, built possibly as a place of refuge in case of threatening danger besides being a place for the worship of their gods. Inside I found more signs of rites and worship as practised by the primitive types of the Malayan people of Borneo and Sumatra, their religion being Buddhistic; and here, as was to be expected, I found their idols, although not in the true sense typical Buddhas, certainly had the earmarks of that deity.

Within the temple proper, I made the interesting discovery of a jewelled breast ornament on the idol which was evidently the head of the Pygmies' deities. This ornament was in the shape of a broad fan surmounted by a horned dragon in whose mouth

was held a blood-coloured ruby as large as a fair-sized damson plum. The carving of this figure was excellently executed and beyond doubt of foreign craftsmanship. One piece of solid gold worked into the fan bore a series of designs in which were set many semi-precious stones, chiefly mottled lapis lazuli similar to that found in China and quite different from that which comes from Russia. There were several strange and grotesquely-formed animals, whose eyes were all represented by green fluor-spar, polished and cut cabochon shape, as were also the eyes of the dragon.

The longer I gazed upon the fascinating jewel clasped tightly to the breast of that fat image, the more convinced I became that these people had descended from some lost tribe, or portion of a tribe of those early voyagers who, like the Vikings of the northern hemisphere, had set out to conquer new worlds. The horned dragon was in itself proof of this, for the dragon, above all other carvings and idols, is the symbol of the Malayan peoples, particularly those of Malaya, Sumatra and Borneo. This would also partly account for the extreme smallness of this race, for one branch of the true Malay people is light brown or yellowish-brown and extremely small; in fact, they are nothing more or less than over-sized Pygmies. Possibly the continual intermarrying of these people for many generations explained their extraordinary smallness. I feel justified in claiming them, as a people, to be the smallest on earth.

Taking a last look around then at the big idol with its coarse fat body and its covetous clasping of the jewelled fan, I asked the Priest if he thought I would be permitted to buy that jewel. A look of hateful fury convulsed his face; momentarily he was turned into a fiend and, I believe, had he dared, he would have, then and there, committed some overt act. Hastily recovering himself, however, he suavely explained that it was the most sacred of all their temple possessions; it would be death to the one who would dare even attempt its removal from where it had reposed from time immemorable.

After this outburst I moved a little more alertly towards the doorway. He seemed relieved at my going but yet greatly troubled about something. Before reaching the village he implored me

not to speak of the sights I had seen, giving as his reason that it was against the rigid custom of his tribe to allow any but the ordained to enter their temple. There were several younger Priests in the village who were already jealous of him; they would be only too glad to use such information for his undoing. Of course I consented to keep silent.

CHAPTER 19.

I HAD now been the guest of Loba-Komba for upwards of three months, during which time I had—contrary to my own preconceived ideas—found the M'Zalis an exceedingly interesting and actually a lovable and kindly people. Never had they waged a war of aggression on other tribes. They attacked only when strangers persisted in invading their territory, and then with the sole object of keeping their actual location unknown to the outside world.

Day after day I attempted to reason with myself as to why I hadn't brought to a satisfactory conclusion the sole purpose of my long and arduous journey. And what of my promise to old Chief M'Abuta? Up to now I had not even made personal inquiries, much less done anything about the rescue and return of M'Abuta's two young chiefs.

I had, however, this very day decided that I would postpone my inquiries no longer. Now, at the last moment, Loba-Komba had again withdrawn explaining that, instead of himself, Malhia Binguni Johari would reveal to me all that I wished to know.

Insistence on a show-down had partly been forced upon me by Capera, N'Oballa and the safari boys, rather than by my own personal desire to force an issue myself. During the past three weeks they had been persistently demanding to be paid off and returned to their homes. They had even begun to look upon me with suspicion. I realized only too well that they were asking no more than what they were entitled to. I felt considerably troubled over the question of paying them off without first completing my mission. However, for the moment, Zaphanza herself was here for an important and long proposed conference.

As if conducting a child, she took my hand. "My friend," she remarked, "we have much to talk about. Let us remain outside in the shade of your *bando*. Capera can there bring cool water from the spring to us."

Seating ourselves upon piled *karosses,* we remained for a few minutes in complete silence. Zaphanza had a strangely haunting beauty. Her coal-black, wide-set eyes spoke of kindness and wisdom; they could at times, however, bore into one's very soul. Her features were decidely Egyptian, while her form, seen vaguely through her simple, rather abbreviated, home-spun covering, spoke of perfection in outline and grace—a perfectly-proportioned woman.

In her deep melodious voice Zaphanza suddenly asked how long I intended remaining here. My prompt reply that I hoped to start off within a few days rather took her by surprise, I thought, but after another slight pause, she went: "These people are really nothing more or less than mere children. Some day, when I have further prepared their minds for greater changes I shall, with the considerable wealth accumulated, introduce little by little some of the civilization taught me by my father; but only then will I introduce to them changes which, according to my view, will be certain to bring benefits to these people. My friend," she suddenly exclaimed, "you are inattentive today. What ails you? Are you not eagerly looking forward to a quick return to your own world?"

"Yes—and no!" I replied.

"Perhaps, my good friend, you will explain to me what your 'yes and no' mean."

"Simple," I answered. "First, I would be happy to go for many reasons. Among them are the following: I vowed to Chief M'Abuta to learn the fate of his two sons, and, if humanly possible, to rescue them and either take or send them back to him. Secondly, I am morally responsible for the safe return of my boys, and for the compensation to the relatives of those lost and injured during my journey here. As for the other reason—well, I prefer not to discuss it."

"Your wishes shall be respected; but now, my friend, suppose we get along with the business for which this meeting was planned."

As she moved slightly, the short sleeve of her dress was inadvertently pushed up towards her shoulder. On her upper arm I saw a massive band of gold measuring at least three inches

wide on which were crudely engraved hieroglyphics definitely of foreign origin.

"Are you surprised?" she asked, as she noticed my fixed stare. "For the moment, however, there are other matters to discuss, so let us start at the beginning.

"With my father I was brought here when a tiny baby, from a country far to the north. He had been taken prisoner and sold into slavery to a wild tribe on the edge of a great barren expanse of country. These wild nomads, after a long and adventurous journey, eventually brought us, with many other slaves, to the edge of a great plateau, two moons' travel north of here. They later brought us to the outskirts of the Pygmies' domain. We were treated kindly by Loba-Komba's father. My father lived here for many years; he taught me the wisdom of his people, so that when at last he passed into his spirit land, I was left alone with these little people; but although entirely different from them I was no longer a stranger. I had, more or less, become one of them.

"The skill and wisdom my father had taught me gained remarkable recognition from Loba-Komba's people; they looked upon me with superstitious awe. Having gained womanhood, Loba-Komba, in order to protect me and at the same time exercise some sort of possessiveness, arranged our wedding. Our marriage, until now, has been just a name, for Loba-Komba is old—very old, and also very kind.

"Loba-Komba married me in accordance with the customs of his people. All the honours of a paramount Chief of the M'Zalis were observed and bestowed upon me. Loba-Komba, realizing the great disparity in our ages and stature from the time of our betrothal, more than ever stressed the superstitions already germinated in the minds of his people that I, Zaphanza, their paramount Queen, was in reality a Goddess, sent, as their legends had long prophesied, to succour the Pygmies, to elevate them to the highest pinnacle of learning and progress amongst the peoples of their territory. Therefore, when Loba-Komba suggested to his chiefs that a special little village be built within their own village, to be sacred to all but attendants, priest and councillors, his proposals were received and acclaimed with unanimous approval.

"My very own little village was soon completed, and every comfort that these primitive people could supply was put there for my benefit. Loba-Komba, the kind-hearted, had not only elevated me to the highest possible rank amongst his people, but has since gone out of his way to instil in their minds that I am indeed an infallible deity.

"This, my friend, I firmly believe was done by him to compensate me for having become his wife. He has never to this day encroached upon the sanctity of my person or of my village, except when accompanied by his head councillors, his priests, and in the presence of my household.

"Loba-Komba confessed to me that his life's work was complete when he had prepared me for the position of carrying on the advancement of the M'Zalis."

Zaphanza paused, then turning to me she said: "That, my friend, is the story of my coming amongst the M'Zalis. Also, it explains why I shall ever remain here, always endeavouring to improve my people's status and lastly, by everything I hold sacred, I shall uphold the great honour Loba-Komba has bestowed upon me—his faith, his love, and his hope through me of a better and greater M'Zali people.

"Soon after I became the wife of Loba-Komba, a meeting of an unusually large *impi* of the Obanzis at the distant rendezvous was planned. Upon the return of Loba-Komba with his councillors and warriors I learned that a much larger quantity of gold and other goods bartered for had been brought by the Obanzis. Hence, the reason for a larger *impi*. With them were two prisoners, sons, I was told, of a mighty chief whose country was far off, beyond the jungle lands. The Obanzis had captured and brought them here to sell into slavery. Loba-Komba would not agree to such a barter. He feared outside agitation, as the two big warrior chiefs would sooner or later bring retribution upon us.

"Surly and in a towering rage at the rebuff, the Obanzis were compelled to take their prisoners with them on their return. Unknown to the Obanzis, Loba-Komba's spies tracked the Obanzis as far as the outskirts of our domain. On the second day of their departure, possibly because the Obanzis feared returning the prisoners to their own people, they started quarrelling with the two young chiefs.

"Some of their fighting men were sent ahead of the main body; then commenced a systematic heckling of the two helpless captives who, in utter desperation, made a bold attempt to escape—just what their captors had been egging them on to do. The two prisoners were mercilessly cut down by the fighters posted in hiding ahead of the main *impi*. When the Obanzis had resumed their journey our trackers recovered armlets and ear ornaments of the two slain warriors. I have long kept them in safety, and I will give them to you for your proof to old Chief M'Abuta.

"Now, let us discuss affairs leading up to your arrival, the real purpose of your journey here, and your proposed return. First, as you now know, M'Abuta's two sons never reached this village. Therefore, no matter now how regrettable their cruel and needless murder was, it removes all stigma from the M'Zalis, as also any further duty in that direction from your shoulders.

"I wish to complete a series of important projects which are essential to the welfare and safety of our tribe, by making use of the wealth brought us by the exchange of certain pretty, coloured baubles. Incidentally, the reason, my friend, for your embarking upon such a long and dangerous journey is that you hoped to secure some of these valuable baubles for yourself whether by fair means or otherwise."

Gazing into my eyes she read in them just what I was anxious to hide, and, in sheer discomfort, I turned my head.

"You need not answer. I have long since known," she said simply. She added: "There now remains only your obligation to the boys of your safari. Everything has been planned. You see, we understood your needs. You shall be supplied with enough of those coloured stones to satisfy your urgent needs."

On the spur of the moment I blurted out: "I refuse to accept them! I cannot and will not accept such charity. It would all have been so different had I had to fight and battle and search for such wealth, but to have it handed to one on a platter, as it were—no—I'll never do it!"

"I am not offering you charity, neither a free gift. You will be expected to win and earn what will be allocated to you. And please do not interrupt until you hear my explanation.

"Since the Obanzi tribe no longer exists, it is an urgent necessity for us to have some new go-between, someone of implicit

integrity, through whom Loba-Komba and his people may continue to barter and trade. Ages ago the M'Zalis vowed never to contact directly or indirectly the big white people or natives of normal stature in the territories bordering their domain for fear of treachery and the ultimate annihilation of our tribes.

"It is an unpleasant thought to hold, but the fact remains that whatever contacts we have had formerly with negro tribes of normal stature, or white people generally, have been of such terrifying nature that it is not to be wondered at why we have entirely separated ourselves from the outside world. We have made, as you know, a ruthless and silent war on all humans who attempt to invade our territory, no matter who they may be."

I interrupted Queen Zaphanza by asking: "Would it not have been wiser and safer if Loba-Komba, himself, or one of his most trusted aides, had traded direct with the Arabs? True, the journey is far and dangerous, but he would have saved the share which the thieving Obanzis took, and at the same time have avoided the possible treachery towards your people that you dread so."

"I have already answered this," Zaphanza explained. "Our efforts along the lines you suggest have always proved most disastrous. A trade treaty made ages ago between the rulers of the M'Zalis and the Obanzis assured the Obanzis of a safe journey to and from the north bank of the Aruwimi thrice yearly and to our amphitheatre where you first met Loba-Komba. No white man before yourself has ever entered this village. It was agreed that the Obanzis were to trade stones which the Arabs appear to be eager to get. These were to be supplied by my people in exchange, for the most part, articles of necessity to us.

"The Obanzis, in order to maintain this profitable treaty, never broke the terms of our agreement or penetrated farther than the dead-line, which was the amphitheatre.

"As time went on, however, the Obanzis gradually became a decadent race. Loba-Komba, aware of this, did not, however, wish to precipitate anything which might give the outside world a clue to our whereabouts. He therefore continued his treaty with the Obanzis, although expecting treachery at any time. Iron, salt, and implements with which to continue our scheme of re-

modelling this and other of our villages into model towns are continuously needed, as also small quantities of gold for ornaments.

"Only small quantities of these articles can be brought to us on any one journey. The jungle trail, blazed by the Obanzis through innumerable years of repeated journeyings, is now, for the first time in our memory, safe.

"The route taken by them makes the journey to the outside world much shorter and decidedly easier to travel than the route you took—and by the way, it will always puzzle, and possibly ever remain a mystery to these Pygmies, how you managed to reach this spot alive, as even the jungle Pygmies would not attempt that route.

"The Obanzis exist no longer, at least not on this, the northern side of the Aruwimi. The few remaining now on the south side are of such a negligible number that they cause no more uneasiness.

"The way is now cleared for another enterprising and trustworthy party who, led or controlled by one of courage and impeccable character, can profitably and with comparative safety now take up the work where the treacherous Obanzis have so suddenly ceased. This, my friend, is the way in which I had hopes you could and would serve me and the M'Zalis."

I dared not look up for fear she might read in my eyes the exultant thoughts that were racing through my mind.

After stating that I would think over what she had said, I assisted her to her feet, and, after conducting her to the edge of her own little village, I hastened back to find Capera and N'Oballa and discuss this sudden and unexpected turn of events and also outline a new trading treaty which I proposed to entrust solely to N'Oballa.

"N'Oballa," I said, "you are not aware, or even if you are, the boys of our safari are certainly not aware of the fact that every Obanzi north of the Aruwimi has been wiped out, a just punishment for such traitors and enemies of the M'Zalis.

"Throughout our many journeyings of danger and hardship you have been courageous and uncomplaining. In recognition of your courage and loyalty I am about to place an even greater trust in you, one which may hold or destroy the safety of a whole

people. N'Oballa, your warriors must never suspect that the route heretofore followed by the Obanzis is now safe. They must at all times be led to believe that from now on to the time of their return to their homes, every step of the way is fraught with danger and that it is only through the friendship and services of Loba-Komba and his silent fighters that the way is kept clear for their passage through the Itura and on as far as the northern bank of the Aruwimi.

"You must strengthen their belief in danger and also their superstition all along the route, so that by the time they reach the safety of their own lands they will be in such panicky fear of that route north that none will ever voluntarily desire to return over it.

"None, except you and the Kikuyu interpreter, must ever know anything about the coloured stones. I have decided to give you full responsibility to carry on the job which the Obanzis have so unceremoniously broken off. This trading pact will also, in a sense, compensate your Chief M'Abuta for the loss of his sons."

I went into minute details of how they were to transport the stones East to trade for implements, utilities and provisions. Many other details I went into, much of which I was compelled to reiterate over and over again. When it came to the point of discussing remuneration I promised to explain this point fully to him on the morrow.

A few minutes later the pattering of bare feet and the murmur of voices were heard approaching my *bando*. Looking up I saw Loba-Komba's chief councillor, also his fetish man, and about half a dozen more of the tiny aides. Loba-Komba had come to conduct me to the Queen.

At a glance I took in the details of the assemblage. I saw Zaphanza seated at the far end, clad in a soft revealing robe; she wore a single dazzling ornament, consisting of a heavy band of gold encircling her head, in addition to the armlet which she had told him she had never removed. In the centre of her head-piece was set a flaming red jewel, slightly irregular in shape and partly polished, which at the slightest movement blazed a fiery red.

The long table consisted of a rough structure hewn from a tree and cut to fit into the length of the *bando*. Hides, bleached to a snow-white, had been stretched as a covering over its entire length.

The far end of the table had been slightly raised the better to accommodate the taller stature of the Queen. She was seated on a block of tree trunk bearing a near resemblance to a chair. Criss-cross strips of hide had been stretched over it and, although crude and rough enough, it must have been, nevertheless, far more comfortable and decidedly preferable to the bundle of hides upon which I usually sat when eating.

In these ingenious preparations I readily saw the hand of Zaphanza. Welcoming me, she smilingly bade me accept the chair-like contraption next to hers.

Before anyone spoke, everyone first made obeisance to her, not because of compulsion or custom, but simply because of their love and pride in having this one, whom they really believed ethereal, for their very own Queen.

On little blocks hewn from cut-down trees, like so many stumps stuck up around the table, sat Loba-Komba, his chiefs and councillors. As soon as I had taken my place, and without any apparent signal, in trooped women, bearing viands of appetizing aroma on slices of calabash and the bark of trees.

Outside the hut all the villagers had gathered. When at last everyone had had his fill, the coming of Loba-Komba's speech was announced by the craning of necks, the asking of silly questions and a general fidgeting around.

Loba-Komba was lifted by several of his aides upon a high stump. In his squeaky, high-pitched voice, he told eloquently of how they were being continuously blessed by the improvements created by their wise and good Queen; he described in detail the fulfilment of the legends which their forebears had taught them.

Gradually the little fox cunningly led up to the advent of my own coming amongst them and climaxed his speech by announcing that the time had come to show how the M'Zalis rewarded their friends. Then he resumed his seat.

"And now," Zaphanza said, "we can commence with the affairs which brought us here. There shall be no reticence concerning any subject connected with the business to be discussed. Everyone here is now a M'Zali."

A murmur of acquiescence and affirmative wagging of woolly heads followed her words.

"You, Loba-Komba, will please explain to the Mze Johanze the secrets and ambitions of our people."

Again standing up on his little peg-like stool, Loba-Komba, in a few well-chosen words, replied that he would prefer someone else to do that. He would, if she would graciously accept, be happy to confer the honour upon their beloved Queen. Scrambling down from his perch, with the assistance of his aides he placed on the table-like bench several tiny hide pouches, each laced tightly at one end and sewn securely all around with thin strips of the same material.

Then the Queen spoke: "You, Mze Mkubwa Johanze, of the M'Zalis will be expected to help in the future welfare of our people by undertaking to provide a safe permanent and trustworthy trading agent for our products. You have, of course, wondered how and where we get our supplies of coloured stones. What I am about to divulge will seem like an exaggeration, but, nevertheless, they are facts only.

"You, Mze Johanze," she continued, "have on many occasions inspected and assisted in the construction of the dam built across the river flowing around the base of this hill. You have, however, never guessed its true purpose. The tower you so often gazed upon has been just a look-out tower. True, it is a look-out tower but, it is of far greater importance than that. Listen carefully, Mze Mkubwa, and pay heed. Many, many years ago, as is their custom even to this day, the young men of our people bathed, swam, and dived in the river about one mile upstream from where the dam is now being built. It was the wont of the more venturesome to climb upon a rock from which to dive, for at this particular spot the river was considerably deeper than elsewhere.

"The rock in question was nothing more or less than the dome-shaped outer rim of a cave, the mouth of which, according

to the rise and fall of the river in dry and wet seasons, was always more or less submerged by the river waters. No one had ever ventured to enter that forbidding black hole.

"A time came, however, when one of the divers, a young sub-chief, more courageous, or foolhardy than his companions, boasted he could dive down from the top of the big dome rock and touch river bottom. The others, of course, as often occurred in such situations, dared the boaster. Accepting the dare, the strong young diver made good his boast by coming up clutching a handful of river-bottom gravel. This, in sheer bravado, he flung down at the feet of his companions. That diver, my friend, was the great-grandfather of Loba-Komba himself, the discoverer of the wealth of the M'Zalis. Flinging his handful of gravel down he presently noticed colour from the stones reflected in the afternoon sun. Not knowing their value, he merely thought them nice to look at. Later he learned that by long days of continuous rubbing together the brilliancy of the bright baubles was enhanced.

"On later occasions, further diving was rewarded by a variety of stones in size and colour but, eventually, no more were found; the supply was exhausted and in no other part of the river could any be found.

"Later, a wandering tribe of Obanzis, then a clean, honest people, having previously arranged an *indaba* with our chief at the great *donga,* were given a few stones to take with them back to the big Sailing Waters, in the hope they would be able to exchange them for wire and salt. Months later, on their return, they gave glowing accounts of how favourable the Arab traders, east of the Great Inland Sea (Lake Victoria Nyanza), had been toward them on their exhibiting the bright stones.

"Stores, as much as the Obanzis could carry, were showered upon the carriers. Urgently the greedy traders pleaded with the Obanzis to bring more stones and as speedily as possible, for which they would receive big rewards. The Obanzi Chief, then as upstanding a chieftain as any, informed Loba-Komba's ancestor that spies had been sent after them but, as he explained, none of them that followed—as was customary, under the circumstances—were ever permitted to return to those who sent them.

"This unexpected supply of baubles which brought in exchange so many needs, started the wily progenitor of Loba-Komba putting his imagination to work. He hied himself off day after day to sit on the bank opposite the rock from which he had dived, head cupped in his hands, watching and thinking. As the dry season continued the river dropped lower and lower. One day when the river was at its lowest, he swam across and was surprised to find water rushing from the cave to keep up to the level of the swiftly-falling river. Curiously watching, he was suddenly surprised to see one of the bright pebbles being washed from the cave into the river at his very feet. He did not stop to recover it, but pulled himself up to peer into the cavern—the water now being extremely low, access was easy.

"This by-gone relative of Loba-Komba's must have been a man of great courage possessing a capacity for thought far beyond his fellow men of his day. He kept his secret for the time being. Later he was seen making resinous torches. His close acquaintances, getting no response to their questioning, at last declared him soft—a river-bank sitter. But to all, he paid no attention. Then, suddenly, he took to disappearing for days on end. None knew where he went, until one day he returned jubilantly singing the happiest of Pygmy songs. Direct to the Mze Mkubwa's *bomba* he rushed. He was closeted there for several hours, at the end of which Loba-Komba the First had suddenly, without apparent rhyme or reason, been promoted to a rank second only to the Mze himself. Later, on the demise of his king, he succeeded to that paramount position himself.

"Having waited for the river to fall enough for him to wade through the cavern's entrance and armed with torches from the cache he had made nearby, Loba-Komba the First made short, careful inspections of the cavern. Becoming better acquainted with its greatness and familiar with its many passages, he eventually learned its shape and dimensions. Also, he discovered that the river waters, on reaching a certain height, flowed over a brink, or hump, from where it flowed away farther and deeper into the blackness of the vault.

"It was whilst following the course of this overflow that he suddenly became aware of daylight far ahead coming from

directly above. As he came nearer, the light grew and grew to enormous proportions, until at last, to his intense amazement, he stood fairly under the immense funnel-shape which today you recognise as our look-out tower.

"The walls of this colossal, naturally formed concavity were found by Loba-Komba to be almost perpèndicular and, for the greater part, as smooth as hewn granite. During his many visits the plucky little chief kept his discoveries for a time a profound secret.

"This was not the only important discovery of Loba-Komba the First. At some distance from the main cavern another of lesser dimensions was found; the ceiling of this cavern was low and in the glow of the explorer's torch it blazed with a million points of dazzling light.

"Loba-Komba's dumbfounded amazement over, on searching around he discovered many of the same kind of stones he had found in the river scattered about at his very feet. That cavern, my friend," said Zaphanza, "has since proved a veritable store-house of wealth.

"For many decades the Pygmies kept their secret, for it is through this source only that we get all we require from the outer world, a little gold included. The present Loba-Komba had, for some time past, had reason to suspect treachery from the Obanzis and was, therefore, in actual fact, glad of an excuse to terminate our trading relations with the potential murderers.

"On examination of the outside terrain of this hill, the great rock formation, which was formerly looked upon as an unscaleable rocky mass and which is now our look-out tower, was discovered to be nearly circular with an immense funnel-like opening from the top to the interior of the caves. It had been for aeons just a landmark for the Pygmies. Now, it represented something of far greater importance; it gave air and light to their secret treasure-house, and to the agile brain of 'little-big' Loba-Komba it represented a fortification, a means of escape if attacked by superior forces."

"For several decades a rough staircase was laboriously built from solid stone, each block cut to fit and interlock with each other, zig-zagging back and forth. Work was continued with

diligence, until at last, these persistent Lilliputian workers ultimately brought their structure to the very rim of their mammoth chimney-like tower.

"During the long years of their tenacious labour the Pygmies had piled around the rim of their tower thousands of large stones arranged in such a manner that they may be, with a minimum of exertion, instantly toppled down upon an enemy. Also, the amazing aspect of their ingenuity is the almost incredible fact that with the manipulation of wooden levers at the apex of their steps they can be instantly demolished, thereby preventing possible invaders from following.

"A duplication of the outside staircase has been built on the inside of the tower leading down into the cavern, which is always kept heavily stored with provisions for our people's sustenance in case of a long siege.

"And now, Mze Mkubwa Johanze, I think, for the time being this is all that is necessary to explain. We can now discuss your own plans of making Chief M'Abuta, through N'Oballa, our new trading go-between.

"All present here are fully aware of the necessity of creating a trading link with all possible speed for us with the outside world. We know your plans and have already given our full approval thereto. The proof of such is now here, on this bench."

Addressing Loba-Komba, Zaphanza asked him now to untie the little pouches.

Could they be deceiving me? Was I dreaming? Had I been whisked off to a land of make-believe? Incredulously I stared in undisguised amazement. The pouches were filled with coloured pebbles. In the wildest flights of my imagination I could never have believed that Jacobus' old legend would have ultimately led me to such a fabulous discovery.

Suddenly, I was brought back from my daze by Zaphanza's voice saying: "This pouch of coloured stones is to be taken by your trusted Masai, N'Oballa, to the Eastern traders. He will pay for the articles needed by us, and with part of the proceeds of these other stones, he will pay off his boys and warriors, retaining a considerable portion with which to recompense the families of those boys lost during your journey here.

"For no other purpose must any portion of the proceeds of this pouch be used, or the wrath of the M'Zalis will fall swiftly upon the disobedient one.

"This second pouch is to be divided in this order: One-half as recompense to Chief M'Abuta for the loss of his two sons; the other remaining half to be equally divided as follows: one-half for the Chief's services and, as a tribute to him for keeping secret the continuous missions which his Chief N'Oballa will from time to time undertake for us. The remaining one-quarter of that pouch of stones shall be for N'Oballa's services. Your own Capera and boys will receive their share from you out of this pouch, which is entirely yours.

"These last two little pouches are to be sold to the Arab traders for the highest value in gold; half of this gold must be brought back here by none other than N'Oballa; the remaining half shall be used by King M'Abuta and his aides to purchase the articles described hereon."

Here Zaphanza unveiled a piece of old cloth on which, in some way, she had scrawled with a stick and vegetable dye little pictures, and in some instances names of articles wanted. Prominent amongst this conglomeration of wanted articles were salt, sugar, threads, needles, a variety of linen and cloth and soap.

Zaphanza continued: "And now, before drawing the business end of this conference to a close, my friend, one very important point must be impressed upon N'Oballa, who will, in turn, pass it on to Chief M'Abuta. It is thus: Should any of them ever divulge our secret, or impart to the traders the true source of the coloured stones, swift retribution will follow. The M'Zalis will never rest until every one of their tribe, sooner or later, have been hounded down."

The interpreter, Kobanzi, also was compensated and sworn to secrecy in the presence of the chiefs and councillors of the Pygmies. N'Oballa and Capera were next to go through a similar ordeal.

In order to perpetuate a dread amongst N'Oballa's natives for the Obanzis throughout this territory, a large party of Pygmy warriors, spies and trackers were to accompany them as far as the north bank of the Aruwimi, ostensibly to guard N'Oballa's safari

from surprise attack by the Obanzis, but which actually no longer existed.

To falsely impress the fighters and safari boys, occasional reports of minor conflicts were to be brought back to N'Oballa's camp so that by the time the Aruwimi was reached all, except N'Oballa, the leader of the safari, would have such a wholesome fear of that old Obanzi trail that no future unauthorized and unescorted party would dare its dangers.

CHAPTER 20.

N'OBALLA was instructed to place each carefully picked member of his party, who would return with him carrying the stores later, under sacred oaths of silence, and none, except N'Oballa and the old Chief M'Abuta, were ever to be acquainted with the nature of the contents of the carefully-packed little hide pouches.

Following the completion of these arrangements, festivities and days of hunting were planned by all. Huge quantities of fruit, vegetables, nuts and game were gathered; enormous calabashes were filled with native brew. The whole village and its inhabitants were garlanded with bright foliage and flowers from the nearby jungle. A good deal of merry-making went on between the safari boys and Pygmies preparatory to N'Oballa's departure.

A few days later, just at sunrise, N'Oballa led out his warriors to set out on their long and difficult return to Chief M'Abuta's territory. The whole village turned out to wave and cheer them on their way. Zaphanza, Loba-Komba, their chief aides and I, accompanied the little band until the edge of the highland overlooking the receding lower country was reached. Here they made their farewells to the travellers and then stood watching the departing safari picking its way through the tall grasses of the low plains like a winding rope; then thin out to a mere thread, until it disappeared finally in the distance.

After N'Oballa's departure thoughts of my own early return to civilisation persistently crowded my mind. I had travelled where no other white man had travelled before. I had penetrated the farthest fastness of the jungle and mountain. My quest was ended. I had discovered those I had set out to find, had learned much of their customs, and listened to their tribal legends. There remained little to accomplish here. It was, in very truth, living in an alien world, amongst a people whose

customs and laws were full of unpredictable surprises. It had been as though a spell had been woven around me. Now that spell was broken I was conscious of a burning desire for my own kind; my wish to return to civilisation now reached a state of nostalgia. So at last I decided to interview Loba-Komba with the object of advising him of the possibility of my setting out on the return journey within the next few days.

On making my plans clear to him, he insisted on sending with me, carriers, guides and warriors. Later, we went into details as to the best route to follow, discussing at great length the possibility of returning to the eastern border of the Itura Forest and ultimately to the Semliki by the northern route. I asked if he knew of a better route for my return than the one which N'Oballa had taken. It was finally decided that as the country wherein the Pygmies were located, was a kind of "no-man's land," situated between the Rivers Bili and M'Bomu, my return route should lead me north-west until we reached a point on the borders of Bangi-Shari-Chad, South Western French Equatorial Sudan, and Belgian Congo, between Bangassu and Gufuru. Here the escarpment would facilitate our progress into the higher country of Shari-Chad and from this point we would turn east. Our first obstacle would then be the River Shinko en route to Bhar-el-Ghazal.

Loba-Komba reiterated his determination to send a small *impi* of his picked fighting men for a great part of the journey, insisting that this was the least he could do for one who had proved himself such a staunch friend and wise councillor to his people and himself.

For the following three days Capera and I were hard at it preparing the safari for the long journey ahead. On the morning of the fourth day after my talk with Loba-Komba, my safari and I were ready, everyone buoyant at the thought of starting at last on our return journey.

Chief Loba-Komba, Queen Zaphanza, their councillors and medicine-men, in fact the entire population of the village of tiny people were there to see us off, waving their hands and yelling their good-byes. Although greatly relieved at eventually getting away, it was with many pangs that I eventually turned my face

away from that friendly, smiling throng and headed for the Egyptian Sudan.

The Pygmies who accompanied me proved invaluable as guides and scouts, often warning us of big game or silent enemies long before my boys had any hint of the proximity of anyone but ourselves. Their knowledge and desert-craft were uncanny, and the silent swiftness in ascertaining whether it was a friend or otherwise was appalling.

One day whilst inside the boundary of Equatorial Africa, a little east and south of Tambura, we passed the tent camp of a band of Dervishes of the Mangbettus. These people, being nomadic, carry their worldly possessions about on their camels, living under canvas from the day they are born to their demise. These people warned us that a caravan of the Momfus was near the route we were heading for. The Momfus, they said, were war-like and treacherous, and might prove less friendly towards us than themselves. After resting with them for a while we passed on but, not meeting with any adventure, for the time being I gave no further heed to the warning.

I had forgotten all about the incident until that night when making camp I was suddenly reminded of the Momfus. In checking up the safari I found a shortage of one Pygmy. Trying to find out what had happened to him, I was met in every direction by stubborn silence. Taking Capera aside I demanded to know what it was all about. Reluctantly he related that the Pygmies, having learnt of the threatened danger, had pushed speedily ahead. I recalled that that very day I had seen them go off in different directions but had taken no particular notice, thinking they were off on scouting jaunts. Capera informed me, however, that they had deliberately set out to waylay those Momfus and had returned, one or two at a time, from different directions showing signs of extreme fatigue, also several bearing wounds of a more or less serious nature.

Seeking out the chief of the Pygmies, I insisted that he explain his actions and why one of his men was missing. Raising himself to his puny full height, which was about to my waistline, he answered with dignity: "Bwana, I have command of my men; you are our friend but you not not our King. We would

kill anyone in order to protect you, thereby fulfilling Loba-Komba's orders. We do not harm the Bwana, our friend, but the Momfus may not like him as well as we do and then maybe they kill you and we dare not return to our homes. So, Bwana, this is why we go far each day to make a good and safe path. Unfortunately, today the Momfus were many; we have lost a good fighting man—our best blow-pipe shot, he never missed; but today the enemy, being great in number, got around in the grass and soon brave Bajhada was no more. Bwana, we have served you and we have obeyed our King."

I assured the spokesman that I appreciated his protecting my life and obeying the mandates of his King, but that I considered it unnecessary to cause further bloodshed and insisted that he must never again take his men out of sight of our own scouts.

Several days before reaching M'Boga I sent my fastest runner with a message to Entebbe where it had been arranged that I was to receive news of Antoine. I could barely restrain my impatience to hear what I dearly hoped would be the news of my old comrade's complete recovery.

For the remainder of their sojourn with us, at least to the best of my knowledge, the Pygmies behaved like "civilized savages." When within striking distance of the Semliki Valley, the diminutive Pygmy Chief led me to an elevation and, pointing to the mighty snowcapped Ruwenzori across the valley, said:

"Bwana, our friend and the friend of our King, protector of our people, we have earned the right to return to our own people. Our King's orders have been obeyed; you are safe. We have come to the end of our journey; it is here, kugwa Bwana, we must leave you. Our journeyings have been made pleasant by the kindly consideration and wise counsel which you have bestowed. We have profited by your wisdom and shall become greater and better warriors through the strategy which we have learned from you. May the great spirits guide you safely back to your own people. Some day when you return to our domain you will receive the homage due to the great chief of our tribe which you now are."

At a signal from their diminutive chief, his followers raised their hands, palms towards me, as high into the air as they could

reach and, with a guttural exclamation of farewell, turned and made off on their return and, in no time, were swallowed up in the early dusk of the African twilight.

I stood some time almost as though expecting them to reappear. A relentless, dauntless little people, at times seemingly treacherous and blood-lusting, yet I had found them in many ways more loyal than most humans; and their word was unbreakable. These diminutive creatures would gladly have given their lives to protect mine and incidentally obey the commands of their monarch. Their customs and systems were a revelation for such a primitive people. Always I remember them as a people loyal and true who, because of their diminutive stature, felt compelled to protect their own territory by a means appalling to our ethics, but necessary indeed for their self-preservation—that underlying law of all peoples, be it in the jungle, the desert or city.

We had just settled around our fires preparatory to our evening meal when the boys on watch gave a shout of warning, and a moment later there staggered into camp the boy whom a week previously I had sent to Entebbe. He squatted near my fire panting heavily, then imparted the joyful news of Antoine's safe arrival at Nairobi and his restoration to health.

At the end of eleven weeks from the time I left the Pygmies' village I reached the Semliki and eventually Port Florence on the eastern shoulder of Lake Victoria Nyanza, and, a few days later, arrived at Nairobi, where I was met by Antoine, who greeted me in true French fashion with a bear-like hug.

It took several days to pay off the boys and compensate the families of those brave fellows who had lost their lives whilst participating in our quest. Capera refused point-blank to leave me and journeyed with me to the coast where, from Mombasa, we set sail for the Cape. Capera, accompanying me to the Cape, took the place, to some extent, of that brave and devoted Jacobus, whom I shall ever mourn.

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